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Spare Rib

Back To School

FOCUS ON:
Sex Education – How (Married) Gerbils Do It
Schoolgirls Talking
Pornography in the Playground
Nursery Nurses Changing Course

PLUS! Ideas, materials & contacts for fighting sexism in schools

ALSO...Feminism USA, Part Two
AND News Reviews Poetry

A Women's Liberation Magazine
October 1978 Issue 75 35p

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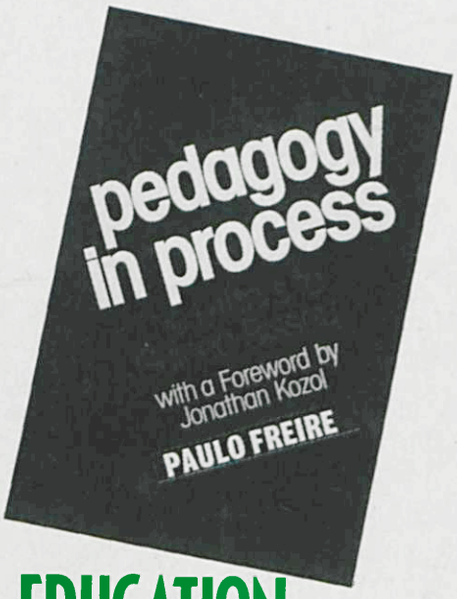

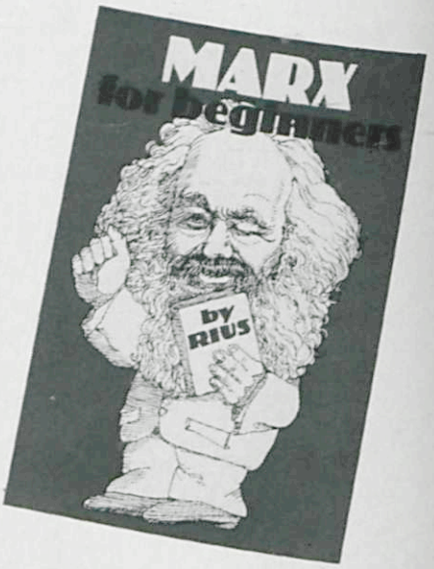

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Since January, when we first thought of doing a special issue on education, we've heard from many school students and teachers about the sexism they have to put up with in their everyday lives. This issue is full of their experiences in nurseries, schools and colleges. It's not meant to be comprehensive, but to focus on instances we think are particularly telling.

It's not enough for us to demand 'equal rights' and 'equal opportunities'. Boys and girls doing cookery and woodwork together, as they do now in more and more schools, doesn't necessarily erase sexist attitudes as the school girls make clear on pages 6-8. And the nursery nurses show that it's not a question of getting men on their course, but of making radical changes, both in the syllabus, and in society's attitudes towards childcare.

So what **will** bring about the changes we'd like? Girls and women students are now beginning to form consciousness raising discussion groups, and so are some teachers. This could be the most important step to take, and one which we hope this issue of **Spare Rib** will help to support – by showing how widespread sexism is in schools, and by putting more girls and women in touch with each other.

There is at present a great lack of feminist materials in schools. Unless there are feminists on the staff, the ideas of the women's movement are unlikely even to get a mention – except for the usual sneers at 'women's libbers'. So we hope that this magazine will get into many schools, and that the poster will go up on a lot of classroom walls. Please do what you can to put it up where girls can see it.

Spare Rib is produced collectively by Anny Brackx, Alison Fell, Jane Harrison, Susan Hemmings, Sue Hobbs, Pat Kahn, Laura Margolis, Jill Nicholls, Rosie Parker, Ruthie Petrie, Angela Phillips, Linda Phillips, Janie Price, Amanda Sebestyen, Carole Spedding, Ruth Wallsgrove, Zoe Fairbairns.

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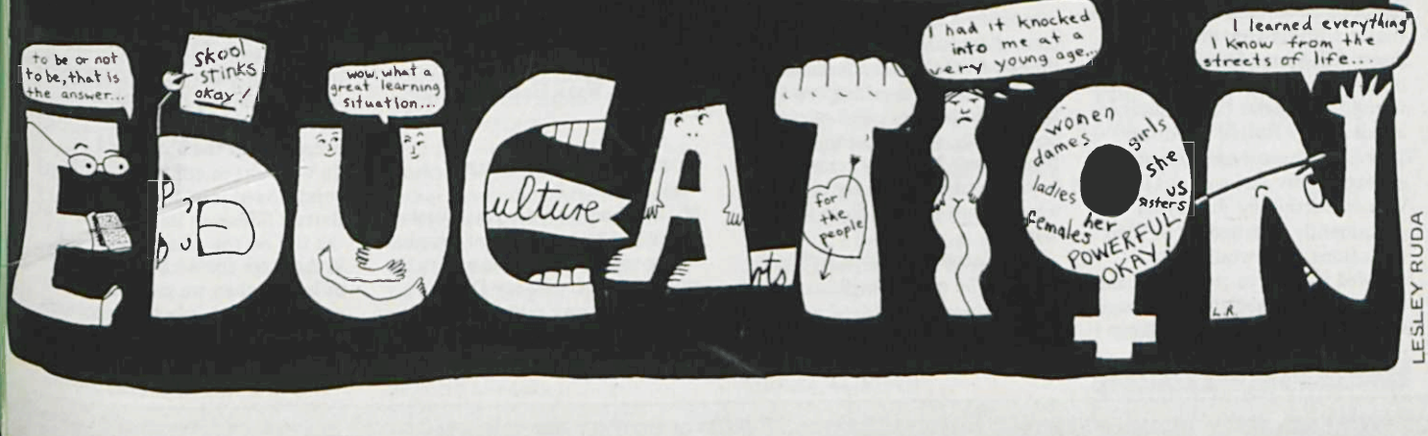


LESLEY RUDA

How *Spare Rib* doesn't get around

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
Many times I have wished I had sent off that subscription form. I thought that if I placed an order direct from W H SMITH (STOCKTON) they just might think there was a demand for *Spare Rib* and start to stock it alongside the ~~rubbish~~ 'other' ladies' magazines.

Tish pooh, thought I when they gave me a personal file, however will other 'thinking' females find out. Surely there is a great demand in T'North other than ME.

Off home I trotted on July 8th secure in the knowledge that WHS had ordered my copy.

Back I trudged on 15th–NO SPARE RIB.

Hopefully on 22nd–HASN'T COME.

Must be here now on 29th–SORRY.

Through the mists of time this Aquarian stumbled through life silently murdering WHS shop assistants in her night fantasies.

Back on August 12th hoping for at least a ticket to their staff dance–still no *Spare Rib*.

It's beginning to sound like *Dragnet*, isn't it?

August 19th, patience fraying, I stepped into the shop and looked into the *empty* file.
I smiled at the assistant (through my teeth) and asked for an explanation. She checked her book and with an amazed look on her face informed me it had definitely arrived. "Somebody must have stolen it"–and continued, "who would want to steal THAT?"

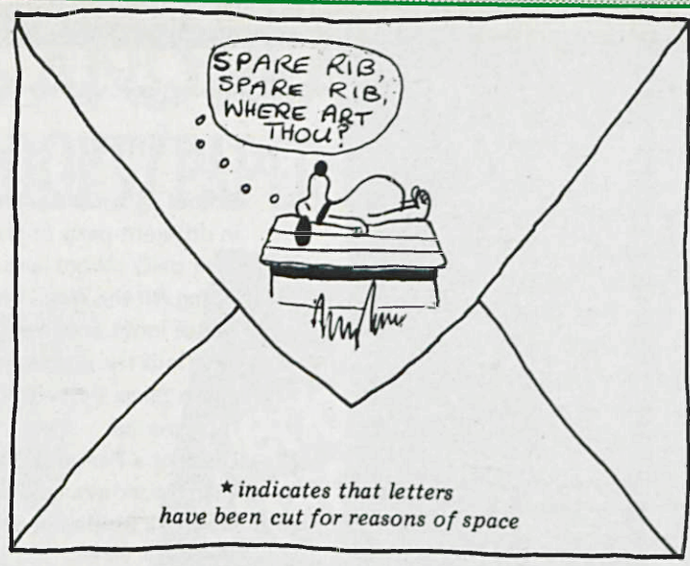
"Could it have been misfiled?" I asked.

"What a good idea, I hadn't thought of that" she said.

"I'll tell you what, I'll go and finish my shopping while you look through these five or six hundred files and I'll expect to collect it at 5pm" I offered.

"Fine", her mouth dropped.

At 5pm I received my copy of *Spare Rib* and carried it home as if it were a newborn baby. I can now rest easy until the September issue comes out.
love,
Irene Smith
Billingham, Cleveland.



** indicates that letters have been cut for reasons of space*

Too Rude?

Dear *Spare Rib*,
We don't want to sell the Visual Issue, and are returning the 60 issues we have left. Everyone in the Collective found the cartoons upsetting and offensive and felt that they perpetuate a lot of the myths about women that we thought we were fighting.

Are we really obsessed with pricks or are we just trying to reduce men to sexual objects as they do us?
In sisterhood,
A Woman's Place Collective
London WC2

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I have no intention of renewing my subscription. After the cartoons in the July issue, symptomatic of the decline of your magazine, I don't think I'll be the only reader you lose.
Yours sincerely,
Elizabeth Ryder
Leamington Spa.

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
We in Haringey Women's Group strongly disagree with the action taken by A Woman's Place Collective in withdrawing the sales of *Spare Rib* Visual Issue from their bookshop. We fell that if they had wanted to register their grievances about Lesley Ruda's cartoons they could have done so more constructively and without involving censorship by displaying prominently a statement of their objections. This would have enabled women to read and make up their minds about the cartoons without depriving them of the rest of that issue.

Unlike A Woman's Place Collective, there was no consensus of opinion in our group. A few of us thought them instructive and funny, others found them offensive and boring. What we did agree on, however, was that each individual woman should have the opportunity of judging for herself.
Yours in sisterhood,
Haringey Women's Group
London N 10

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was not offended by the cartoons. I was glad to find that women are able to "expose humorously a phallocentric order" (quote from Lesley Ruda).

I actually cut out the cartoon with the caption "At the third stroke it will be . . ." and put it up on my wall to the delight of all women who've seen it so far. Cartoons are not meant to show something beautiful and ideal but to over-emphasise certain aspects of something negative in order to expose it. That particular cartoon makes me feel sick every time I look at it because it makes me remember a time not so long ago (one changes quickly) when I *was* obsessed with pricks, because I had been a hard-working (you can take that literally) pupil of my boyfriend's. I used to think, "God, please don't let me get cramp before he gets his bloody orgasm", which is not that far from the caption.

I am grateful to that cartoon–it helps me not to forget.
love,
Nicola Buckman
Bochum, W Germany

More about the Matchgirls

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I found Sue Roalman's article on the 1888 strike by women matchmakers interesting and I'd like to see more articles on women's history.

The strike, while a success in many ways, did not achieve healthier working conditions at Bryant and Mays. White phosphorous was known to cause "phossy jaw" as early as 1843 but was not eliminated until 1908 after a long campaign by the Women's Trade Union League. At the time of the strike other safer though costlier processes were available to manufacturers.

The famous feminist Millicent Fawcett, founder of the Fawcett Library, was a shareholder in Bryant and Mays in this period. She, along with the majority of shareholders, voted against any restriction in the use of white phosphorous. She sold out her sisters in struggle in favour of her own class interests.
In sisterhood,
Marianne Craig
Women & Work Hazards Group
London E1.

Sons and Daughters

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
My husband who died last week had asked to come out of hospital so my son left his home and came and nursed him. Every District Nurse that came said the same thing almost–"Isn't your son marvellous, coming in his holidays", (he is a teacher). "If he'd been a girl . . . but a *young man* doing all this." Each time I said, "Yes, he is wonderful but why all this about a bloke? I'm seventy and ill and you still think it would be normal for a daughter to leave her home, give up her holiday but not a son!" . . . and all I got was that I did not realise he wasn't usual and that I did not appreciate him.
Yours,
Edith Hall
Luton.

Showing our muscle

Dear *Spare Rib*,
It puzzles me that in recent complaints about advertising (*SR* 72), one obvious course of action hasn't been mentioned. If an advertisement offends you, stop buying the product and write to the maker to say why. I've done this with Pretty Polly and am about to do it with Colman's. Businesses care about their image (especially when one points out that it is out of date) and about their profits. Why bother with a paper tiger of an Authority?
Yours
Yvette Daoust
London NW9

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I have just read a report by the Equal Opportunities Commission about sex discrimination by building societies offering mortgages. Of the largest societies, the two most likely to discriminate against women are Woolwich Equitable and the Cheltenham and Gloucester.

I suggest that every woman with any amount, no matter how small, in any branch of these two societies withdraw it immediately, and tell the manager of the branch exactly why.

This is one of the few useful bits of information to come from the EOC and I think we should use it.
In sisterhood,
Sally Collings
London N5

Sisterhood – Schmisterhood

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I have been buying *Spare Rib* for over two years and visiting my local women's centre whenever buses and time permit for about the same length of time and I must endorse all the criticisms that Ann Lee made about the conference (*SR* 71). I feel that what she had to say applies over a wider spectrum. Perhaps the movement ought to be renamed 'Some Women's Liberation etc.'
Are we only interested in preaching to the converted or do we want to contact women conditioned into accepting the Barratt house on its neat estate or the flat on top of a tower block? If these are the people we want to influence then we must change our attitudes towards newcomers. We seem to have taken over the male club atmosphere: "I say

sisters, let's blackball this sister–she wears a skirt!"

I teach in a rural comprehensive and tell the girls I come into contact with that they can get a cheap coffee in the local women's centre, and hopefully they'll giggle together if they go, then look around and perhaps become interested. But I feel guilty because if any do pluck up courage to go I'm afraid they're going to be turned off by the cliquey atmosphere.

We must joyfully make all women welcome, whatever their dress or background–those into National Socialism and the right of the Tory party are not going to come anyway. One can be a believer in Women's Liberation without coming from a left-wing middle-class background.

Yours in sisterhood,
Alison Wills
Bishop Wilton, York.

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am probably older than most of your readers (60–just retired) and a lot of the things you discuss no longer affect me on a personal level. I'm glad to see that a lot has been done in the last 30 years, though–30 years ago I needed the Pill, and abortion *and* a refuge for battered wives, and all were unheard of.

One very small quibble–I shied like a scared mare at the phrase "in sisterhood". I was frightened in childhood by several sets of "sisters" and "brothers"–all religions of rather strange kinds. Doubtless I shall get over it. There's always the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady being sisters under the sin and I'm sure they weren't religious sisters.

With love,
Joan Stewart
Harris, Western Isles.

Herpes Hint

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Thank you for the interesting, if depressing, article on Herpes Genitalis. One suggestion for prevention/cure which was omitted was one I picked up about three years ago (I think from a letter in *SR*) – substantial doses of Vitamin E. Eating a spoonful of wheatgerm seems to have minimised the recurrence of herpes since then. On the occasions when I have found herpes starting to form, large doses of wheatgerm capsules (available from chemists or health food stores) usually prevent their developing into chancres – generally they seem to clear up within two or three days.

Love in struggle,
Diana Shelley
London N1.

A Single Mother in Japan

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I've been teaching in senior high school in Tokyo for 12 years. First I made a teacher's union in a private school, and then fought for five years to get a union of part-time teachers.

Five years ago I had a baby. I wasn't married. At the time I was very unhappy and it was very hard to survive with my baby. Most people didn't understand me, even the young men and women in the union–and of course my family didn't either. But then I found some new friends, very fine people from different places.

I am not satisfied with the politics of the women's side of our union. We have a little group where we discuss and campaign about women's problems.

I have had a co-operative nursery with a friend in our town for five years, it's very similar to the Children's Community Centre in England. I've visited this and the National Council for One Parent Families and Gingerbread and the WRRC and *Spare Rib* which I read here for the first time.

I want to make a group or a centre for single working mothers in the near future.

Hiroko Tanaka
36-3405 Asagaya Kita 3,
Suginama Ku
Tokyo, Japan

Let them eat cock?

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
this is about "extract from a novel in progress" (*SR* 73). dear spare rib, are you kidding? would any of you like the job of explaining to me exactly what the connection is between this story and the women's liberation movement? i am not suggesting taking a crude political axe to a piece of art. (heavens) i listen to aesthetic arguments. only i'm very much afraid that in the end what i will get is the political argument: well, one of you will mumble, it was written by a feminist. well, that's not good enough, spare rib, you are selling that story as state of the art feminist fiction–and i don't believe that none of you know any better. sisterhood is about honesty, you know, and not etiquette, conformity or silence.

i don't object to the story because there are cocks. i can imagine a feminist story full of cocks, but it would be funny as hell. i don't find the presence of male genitalia disgusting; i find it boring, it does not involve me. i get curious about this repeated, fetishistic presentation of disembodied cock as an object of intense emotive power. this notion of writing strikes me as collusion in the timeless myth of cock importance.

a feminist writer ought to be working to defuse this myth: rather than telling women, many of whom are culturally conditioned to masochism anyway, that the prick is disgusting, tell them something closer to the truth: that it's not really important at all. that not all of us are tied with either positive or negative intensity to boys' crotches. that some of us are not tied at all.

love,
deb symonds

Working Class Woman

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I have been taking *SR* now for eighteen months. I would like to give you my impressions of the magazine so far–need I say I look forward to it eagerly each month. I think the recent visual issue is very good–particularly the "Mississippi Women" feature. It is great to see pictures of the people you are reading about, and pictures of the writers who contribute to *Spare Rib*. Photography is one of my main interests, and I'd love to see more visual *Spare Ribs*.

It does seem to me, a working class woman, that the women's movement is dominated by very middle class women. The letter in *SR* 71 from Ann Lee, of Birmingham, summed up my own feelings exactly. The Annual Conference is a perfect example of this middle class approach. They are so used to theory and not practical politics that they never get anywhere. This attitude is so alien to working class women like myself who know from the struggles of our mothers and fathers, grand-mothers and grand-fathers, that the only way to get what you want is to organise politically and work within the system as well as without. An example of this is tax reform. Despite much opposition to the discrimination to women who are married by the Inland Revenue, it is only recently the YBA Wife group has been formed. It took the *Sunday Times* and *Woman's Own* to get it under the government's nose. To be a split movement is to be a weak movement–the middle class women must have working class women with them politically–we can teach you how to organise effectively! Working class women are the ones who need abortion on demand, more nurseries etc. Middle class women have always had these–money talks.

In particular, one of the only things I really dislike about *Spare Rib* is this emphasis on having children. Not that I would deny anyone the chance to have children but any fertile woman can do that–there is nothing special about it. We won't change ANYTHING by continuing to have children. Only women who reject this and take an active part politically economically, and socially in the life of the community will change anything.

To say what Anna Briggs does in *SR* 71 ("Reproduction Rights")–"I have always felt that campaigning for abortion didn't help very many women"–I find appalling. I feel abortion is the central issue, the key to our fuller and better lives.

More health articles please!
Yours in sisterhood,
Sue Richardson
Mirfield, W. Yorks

Mothers' Rights (1)

* Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was particularly interested in the Radical Midwives article (*SR* 73) as I'm pregnant at the moment and have been trying to sort out my attitude to the official NHS line for some months. One problem is to *know* that you're not being neurotic/'difficult' if you object to being treated as ill and ignorant.

I could have used support to insist on a home birth but wasn't prepared to fight about it–luckily the local hospital *seems* small and friendly, but I didn't know that when I was quite arbitrarily booked in there.

I now intend to contact some of the groups listed at the end of the article–if there's any particular time when you need support and enlightenment, it's during pregnancy.

Kate Enright
Crowthorne, Berks

Mothers' Rights (2)

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
It is disappointing that you are not more critical about breast-feeding and childcare in relation to women and their independence. It seems to me that many women, wanting to experience their own life-giving powers of labour, birth, breast-feeding etc., unwittingly trap themselves into the traditional all-giving mother role by feeling that they must allow unquestioning access to themselves, their breasts, their time, their emotions. It can become impossible to 'give' when it feels as if life is dragged from you.

Most babies are easily weaned onto ordinary food and real cuddles with mother, father, friends more than compensate for the breaking of the physical tie with the mother. (It can be an easy option to bare the breast to a miserable child instead of cuddling talking, feeling and thinking with a child.) After those early months a mother doesn't *need* to feel that life *depends* upon her, or to 'possess' her child.

To follow from 'Reproduction Rights' (*SR* 71) please let's have something a bit more searching and constructive about the realities of childcare.

Sincerely
Moyra England
Clay Cross, Derbyshire

[redacted]

Is this the first time you've seen Spare Rib? *Did it make you laugh/depressed/angry or bored? Write and tell us what you think.*

Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close
London EC1R 0AT

[redacted]

SCHOOLGIRLS UP AGAINST SEXISM

In Issue 71 we asked people to write in about their experience in schools. Here are three of the replies we received from school girls.

1

I have recently moved to Leeds and am attending a Middle School. During my time here I have been put out a little by the attitudes of some of the teachers towards the girls. In the games lessons the girls have a choice: rounders, tennis and sometimes volley ball in the summer, and in the winter hockey and netball. But the boys have a much more varied choice: rounders, tennis, softball, volley ball and cricket in the summer, and rugby or football in the winter. A lot of the girls fancy cricket and football, and even rugby. The boys laugh at us – it's not surprising really. They would win in a game because no-one will teach us. My friend and I decided to ask our games master if we could learn. I saw him in the dinner line, and I asked him about the girls playing football etc. He gave a surprising answer. "Have you been listening to the radio?" "No", I said. "Well, as long as I'm running the games around here, the girls won't do any of the boys' games." He then walked off. It's impossible to say anything to our headmaster, as he's a male chauvinist pig as well.

But even if we cannot play football we are expected to read about it. When we were given our class reading book, the class went in uproar – the girls did anyway. The book was called *The Goalkeeper's Revenge*, and when sifting through it, I saw a paragraph saying, 'This book is for boys, about boys. Rugby, fighting, trolley driving and football.' That is typical of my school's opinion on girls – we are classed second, while the boys must have what suits them.

Although there are mixed classes for needlework, cookery and woodwork, the work we do is different. In needlework, the girls have to make aprons, and the boys make ties or cravats. This is stupid, because both boys and girls need aprons for cookery. So when we asked the teacher the reason for this, she replied, "The girls are willing to stay in at breaks and finish their aprons, while the boys would like to go out and play football."

I would like the opportunity next year to do all subjects which I am interested in, but I am barred from at present. Instead I am being guided towards girl subjects which usually end up in family care and child care. I know there is a recognisable movement against all these things which degrade us and exclude us. Soon something's going to happen to make it right for us, but it may take time.

Debra Peart, 12 years, Leeds

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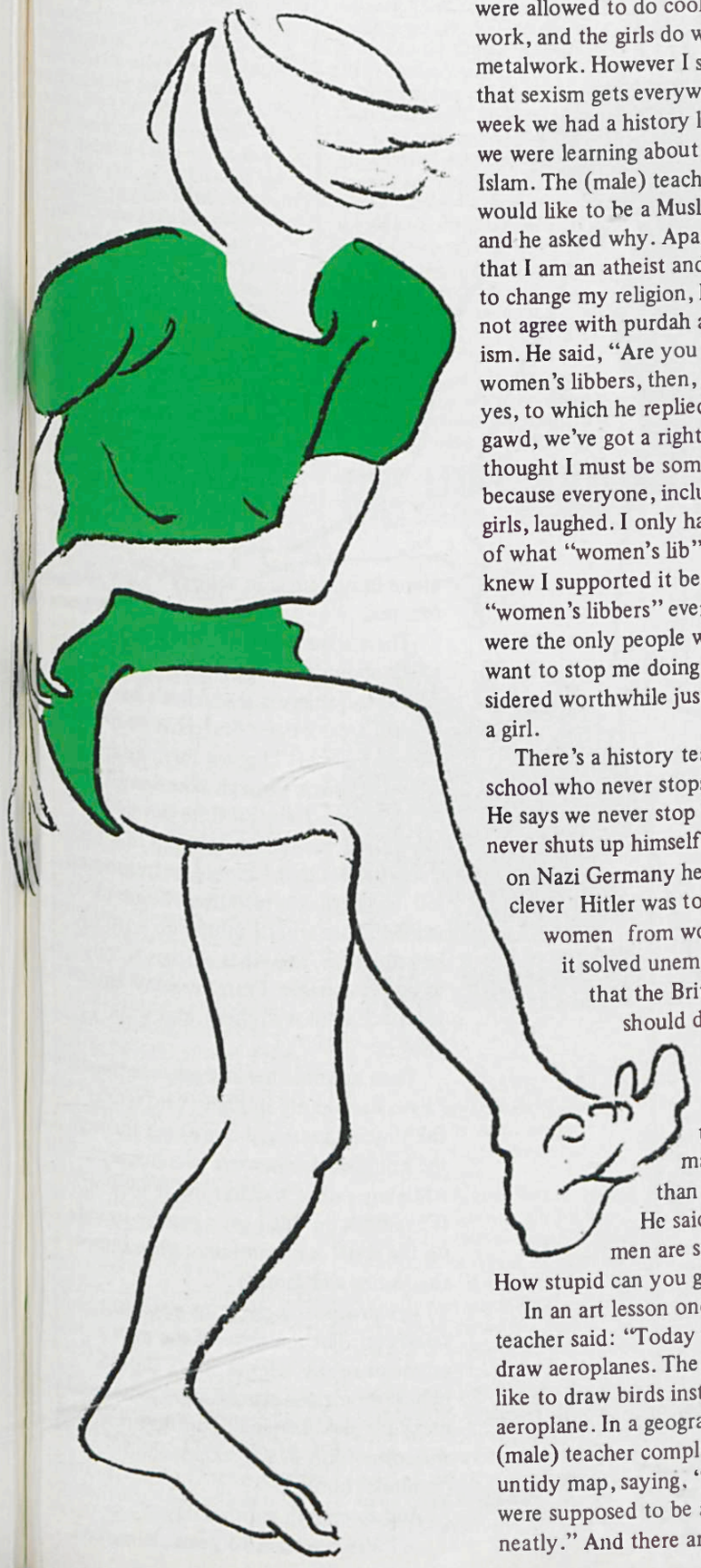


I am at a mixed grammar school, and when I first came here, I didn't think it was particularly sexist, as I had come from a very sexist junior school, where girls were taught they should play with dolls, and boys to be Big and Tough (and beat each other up).

So the sexism at my new school did not seem so blatant, because the boys were allowed to do cookery and needlework, and the girls do woodwork and metalwork. However I soon discovered that sexism gets everywhere. In my first week we had a history lesson in which we were learning about Mohammed and Islam. The (male) teacher asked me if I would like to be a Muslim. I said no, and he asked why. Apart from the fact that I am an atheist and saw no reason to change my religion, I said that I did not agree with purdah and male chauvinism. He said, "Are you one of those women's libbers, then, girl?" I said yes, to which he replied, "Oh mah gawd, we've got a right one 'ere." I thought I must be some sort of crank because everyone, including the other girls, laughed. I only had a vague idea of what "women's lib" was, but I knew I supported it because the "women's libbers" everyone hated were the only people who didn't just want to stop me doing things I considered worthwhile just because I was a girl.

There's a history teacher at our school who never stops insulting women. He says we never stop 'gossiping' – he never shuts up himself. Once in a lesson on Nazi Germany he told us how clever Hitler was to stop all married women from working, because it solved unemployment, and that the British Government should do the same thing. Recently he gave us a test, and worked out that the average boys' mark was 1.5 higher than the average girls' He said this proved that men are superior to women. How stupid can you get?

In an art lesson once the (female) teacher said: "Today we are going to draw aeroplanes. The ladies (sic) may like to draw birds instead." I drew an aeroplane. In a geography lesson, the (male) teacher complained about my untidy map, saying, "I thought girls were supposed to be able to draw neatly." And there are innumerable examples of teachers making this sort of remark.

At my school the headteacher, the deputy head, and the heads of block are all males. There's a senior mistress, but no senior master, presumably because they think the head will always be a man, anyway. All the senior mistress does is to tell the girls off for wearing the wrong colour blouse or something. Last year, all the fourth year girls had to attend a lecture on the follies of wearing high heeled shoes. The boys didn't have to go! To make this even more patronising, the lecturer was a man. If this happens again next year (when I'm in the fourth year) we shall try to organise a boycott.

Obviously most text books are sexist. I once went through my school physics book and counted 80 pictures of people doing experiments. Only one of these was a girl, all the rest were male. In the series of French books used at our school from first to fifth year, the girls are always shown staying at home helping their mothers with the housework, while the boys are out fishing, and their fathers are at work. Other text books, and teachers, constantly refer to the human race as 'Man'. If you ask why, they reply that it means women too. Of course it doesn't. Man means men, and has nothing to do with the other half of the human race which is female.

There is a great deal of opposition to feminism among the pupils as well as the staff. The boys just laugh at it, and often make it clear that they don't like us trespassing on male preserves like the metalwork room. While the girls are afraid of being ridiculed if people think they are 'women's libbers' – they never say feminist.

When I ask people why they are sexist, they always say that people are different, and if we had equality, everyone would be the same. (The usual Tory line.) They don't seem to realise that the individuality of women – and men too – is suppressed by the sexism which flourishes under capitalism. Obviously at an old fashioned grammar school like mine, you'd expect to find rigid attitudes, but there is sexism in *every* school. The way it is drummed into us is indeed what some people actually mean by education. Judging by the attitudes of people my own age, and the way we are being conditioned at school, sexism is definitely alive and kicking, and will survive for a long time to come.

Sarah Wright, 14 years, Middlesex ▶

Here's a typical school day.

As I walk to the station to catch the train to school, I pass the same set of adverts, with photographs of women models, showing off their long legs, and pictures of hunky men showing what their right arm is for.

I sit in the train glancing at my neighbour's magazine, and read *be* like so and so, and *do* such and such to myself, and *wear* a particular lipstick to have all the boys come and kiss me.

I go to an all girls' school. At our assembly in the morning the headmistress announces that our netball team has lost 23-0 to another school and concludes, "Both teams played well." The point that we have no constructive criticism is put to a few teachers by some of us. We point out that our brother school has criticism of this kind and that seems to be beneficial. "Oh, but girls would be upset by that", is the answer.

My friend and I try to bring up the subject of stereotyping in girls in a discussion. The other girls refuse to believe that they shave their legs and wear mascara and want to marry as soon as possible for fear of becoming old maids, as a result of conditioning. Even the teacher refuses to accept our arguments. My friend and I feel utterly alone in our anger at society's view of females.

There's the inevitable discussion at break about what eye shadow so-and-so wears, and sniggers that what's-her-name doesn't wear a bra. "She must be a women's libber!" I show them *Spare Rib*. They flick through it and say, "Where's the John Travolta pin-up?" They show me their magazines in a tone that suggests that I should be humoured, tell me that I can take them home to read, and see what I should do with my hair and skin, and what clothes to buy to be fashionable. I *just* keep my temper, decline to read them, and walk away.

Then at home the struggle continues. I have to help my mother (who works full time as a nursery nurse) get through the housework when she gets home, while my father watches the television. If I remark on this I get a lecture based on the sixth commandment, 'honour thy father and mother. . .'

I've practically given up watching television. The majority of the programmes subtly tell me how I should behave to make a success of my life, and make me sick. Instead I curl up in bed with *Spare Rib* or a recommended (feminist) book.

And so endeth another day.

Viv Norman, 13 years, Romford.

Now they've come up with a Minister for Marriage!

The government's latest pre-election gimmick is—a Minister for Marriage. The idea was "leaked" to the press in August and they of course leaped on it (sometimes to the government's disadvantage, with 1984-style scare stories about young people needing state permission to marry). A Transport House press officer explained to us that "It was a judicious leak to set the scene for a lot of talk about the family leading up to the elections". In other words it's Labour out to prove it's as respectable and conservative as the Conservatives.

The 'Minister for Marriage' is "a pet of Jim Callaghan but a brainchild of civil servants" the press officer explained, so we asked the civil servants at the Home Office what the idea was actually about. Evidently a Home Office working party on marriage guidance was set up in 1975 "to assemble information about marital problems". They heard evidence from a mile-long list of organisations like the British Association of Psychotherapists, the FPA and the NSPCC and are soon to publish a consultative document called *Marriage Matters*. All they'll say now is that they suggest that either the Home Office (which has been grant-aiding marriage guidance councils since 1948) or the DHSS (responsible for supplementary benefits and so on) should take on the whole area of 'marriage'. So either Home Secretary Rees or Secretary for Social Services Ennals would be responsible for "developing services and research connected with marriage". They also propose setting up what they call a Central Development Unit for Marital Work.

This is partly a bureaucratic reshuffle, concentrating on marriage not 'the family' (more widely accepted as state-aided) because of the original terms of reference of the working party. We don't yet know what it will do that's not already covered by one department or another. But the implications are horrific: will it concern itself with clamping down on marriages of convenience, making sure married women don't get supplementary benefits, halting homosexual law reform, teaching women to do their chores with love? Significant now is the way this promotion of marriage fits in with Callaghan's "family initiative", kicked off in May in his speech to the Labour Women's Conference and continued in Labour's pre-election poster, their scruffier answer to the Tories' slick tricks ("Labour isn't working . . . Britain's better off with the Conservatives"). It shows Uncle Jim with arms round the shoulders of a smiling crowd of women and children, one big happy family. "Labour's good for Britain, it's good for us all" it proclaims—like Weetabix.

This focus on marriage makes clear what kind of family the government has in mind. And it's not the 'one parent families' or 'single person families' on the housing lists, or a looser community grouping. It's a reaction to the number of single parents and divorces, a refusal to admit that

most marriages are better broken, an attempt to shore up the crumbling institution of the nuclear family.

Health Minister Roland Moyle made the economic motive very clear in a speech he made in July entitled "The family remains the main source of social stability": "Apart from anything else it is far beyond the capacity of the services to take on the burdens of care—for children, the handicapped, the sick and the elderly—that families still carry. On the contrary it is vital that the services should set themselves the positive aim of maintaining and reinforcing family relationships wherever they can." □

PLEASE KEEP SENDING US YOUR NEWS – PHOTOS TOO!

Newshorts by Eva Kaluzynska, Jill Nicholls, Angela Phillips and Ruth Wallsgrove.

Schoolgirls in a Manchester street – from a photographic exhibition by Diane Olson (see Shortlist, *SR 73*). On hire from her at 23 Banff Rd., Manchester 14.

Taxing childcare

Paying a childminder to look after your children while you go out to work is necessary "to fulfil a mother's natural duty towards her children", say the Special Commissioners of the Inland Revenue – and so you're not entitled to tax relief on it. Cathy Itzin, a journalist and single mother, is trying to get a tax allowance for her expenses in paying a childminder on the basis that other expenses that people incur to be able to go out to work – such as for secretaries, cars and even housekeepers for single fathers – are tax deductible.

But the IR ruled that childminders have a dual function: they're necessary for mothers to keep within the law (it's illegal to leave small children on their own) and to be 'proper' mothers, so it's not *solely* an expense incurred through work .....That it would be impossible for women in Cathy's position to go out to work without childcare is considered irrelevant.

A spokesperson for the Treasury said in the Commons that it would be too expensive to change the law. But would the government rather pay permanent social security benefits to single mothers than allow them to pay a few pounds less tax while going out to work?

Cathy says, "Why should not mothers, whether married or single, have the right to work and some of the same support as men receive? I not only need to work – I want to work." She intends to go on fighting. □

NO GO...

Eight young people in Woodford Green, Essex, are occupying their Children's Home with the help of staff and other members of NALGO, the union involved. They are picketing to stop the council rehousing the children away from their friends and school. Tower Hamlets Council want to move them to a smaller house. They don't want to go—and under the 1975 Children's Act,councils are meant to give due consideration to the opinions of children in their care before making any decisions about their future.

In practice, as one Tower Hamlets official said, "Let's face it: children are moved around in every authority as and when necessary. The sad thing is that the kids will believe they will get things by shouting for the rest of their lives"—instead of shutting up and submitting to being pushed around like pieces of paper, like countless other children in care. □

Lead in your head

BP, Shell, Fords and Associated Octel (who process lead for petrol) are being sued by three parents for causing brain damage to children. Lead given off when petrol burns gets absorbed by the body in large amounts—but even minute traces in the blood have been shown to cause hyperactivity, difficulty in paying attention and lowering of IQ. A recent study indicated that up to 40% of children in Birmingham may be brain damaged in this way.

These three people decided to sue althqugh none of their children are—as yet—noticeably brain damaged. They don't expect to win but see it as a tactic to put pressure on the four companies to lower the lead levels in fuel—several other countries, including the USA, USSR and Japan, already have strict laws forcing petrol and car companies to sell lead-free petrol and equip cars with lead filters. □

How I dealt with a flasher

I'd been flashed at as a kid, and with tits my size I don't think a day passes without men trying to make me feel a piece of meat. But somehow you don't expect it in a museum.

I was studying some prehistoric remains when I noticed this guy eyeing me. It made me feel uncomfortable so I moved away. Next thing he's standing right up next to me, got his dick out and is pulling on it, leering at me and muttering some of the most obscene comments I've ever been forced to hear. I suppose he expected me to act like a lady. But instead of dropping my eyes and running away, I dropped my bags and grabbed him. Meanwhile screaming my anger for all to hear.

Naturally Man struggled to get free and began to run. So I ran after him, lungs still going strong. When I finally caught him I had him half way to the ground before someone answered my yells – a great big fella who helped me drag him to the nearest warden, whom I got to call the police.

Man now started pleading with me to reconsider. As calling me "a silly hysterical bitch" didn't work, he explained "it was just" that his imagination had "run away with him". His trump card, on finding me still silent and strong-faced, was to appeal to my guilt. Well, didn't I care that a court appearance would ruin his holiday?

At the cop-shop I was fortunately seen quickly and sympathetically by a policewoman, who congratulated me on what was apparently a citizen's arrest. I made my statement, was told that I might have to appear in court, then I left for friends and reviving spirits.

Two days later, I read in the local paper – under the headline "Woman Gives Chase" – that Man had already been to court and had several previous convictions for "similar offences". So well he might have been worried about his holiday – he was spending the next three weeks of it in nick. One slight twinge of guilt – then I'm glad to say I said sod to female compassion and burst out laughing.

But why the twinge of guilt at all? Because there is so much liberal bullshit about sexual assault. Even from feminists, and particularly from socialist feminists. And I say that as a socialist feminist myself. And yes, I would classify flashing as sexual assault.

It is the aggressive imposition of male 'sexuality' upon passive female. Passive in the sense that she is totally unsuspecting and unprepared, trying to go about her business until forced to watch the male symbolically poke at her.

But no matter how grave the sexual assault, left and liberal hypocrisy remain the same. If we use the courts and police we are deemed reactionary, deluded, told we are encouraging people to believe in the repressive agents of the bourgeois state. If we demand higher sentences for rapists we are curtly informed that prison doesn't *cure* rapists. That it may put them out of action for a while is apparently irrelevant. It's the system which produces rape that we should be fighting – not the individual perpetrators of it. After all, they're victims of their conditioning too, blah, blah.

Fascinating how all these qualms magically disappear when it comes, say, to the victims of racist attacks. For them to want prison for fascists is fine; for us to demand it for humble ordinary-bloke-in-the-street rapists is not. That good old double standard again.

Which is how the male left would like to keep it. It's too threatening to admit that class doesn't explain everything, that maybe men simply as men are often the enemy. That's bringing politics too near the bedroom door.

When the courts allowed Tom Holdsworth – the soldier who brutally raped and mutilated Carol Maggs – to walk away scot free, they gave rapists their blessing and we were outraged. But if we weren't demanding his imprisonment, what the hell were we asking for? A written apology?

As for worrying whether prison 'helps' him and his like, given our present penal system is *all we've got* the question is academic. And personally I couldn't give a monkeys about rapists and their welfare. Compassion for the enemy is a luxury we can't afford.

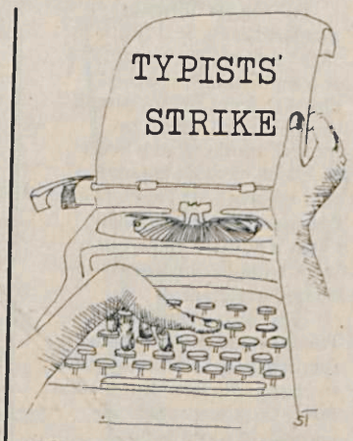
As for what I did, the pressure to justify has made me forget what was just as important. That catching Man made me feel strong; that's good when there's so much to constantly make us feel weak. I had refused to be a passive victim. For once I didn't have to stew in my anger and impotence, but got my own back. I'm glad he spent his holiday in nick. For no other reason than sweet feminist gut revenge.□

Aileen McCauley

Moving story

Clinical psychologist Patricia Durrant has lost her case under the Equal Pay Act against the North Yorks Area Health Authority. She claims that it is because of her sex that they refused to pay her removal expenses when she transferred from a part-time post in Nottingham to a full-time job in York.

Officially, removal expenses (on average over £1,000) are payable only to people transferring from one full-time job to another. Backed by the National Council for Civil Liberties, Ms Durrant argued that this term of contract discriminates against women, often obliged to work part-time while looking after small children. But a Leeds tribunal ruled that she was stretching the meaning of the Act too far by trying to incorporate the notion of indirect indiscrimination from the Sex Discrimination into the Equal Pay Act. The NCCL, who plan to appeal, say the two Acts should be "construed and applied as a single, harmonious code".□



As far as anyone knows, the two month old strike of 78 typists at Camden Town Hall, London is the first of its kind. Backed by the local government workers' union NALGO, the women are bringing the council to a standstill: already activity in the Housing Department has more or less stopped, as has all hiring. But management has not yet made a serious offer to the women's claim for a rise of about £7-8 a week to bring them in line with typists at nearby Islington Council.

What's brought the women out? "People think we're not people; we don't count" says supervisor Jane Franklin. For years now, in the council's six pools and various out-stations, specialist audio-typists have come . . . and gone! Turnover has been as high as 50% in some offices this year and when the strike began the staff shortage was at 31%. Small wonder that those who remained were subject to constant overwork which pressured at least one woman to transfer for health reasons. Complaints were ignored; frustration grew.

And then this summer, after a successful telephonists' strike, the women voted at the NALGO branch meeting to submit a claim for increased pay and to work to rule until management replied. It did not, and on July 14 (Bastille Day!) they came out. At first, backing from NALGO was only local, but recently they were awarded even back strike pay and all this has given them a very strong position.

How has the council reacted? All it's done is try unsuccessfully to divide them by offering piecemeal increments and a proficiency test–which last was angrily rejected as an insult to those who have done the skilled work for years. And so, inside the plush new town hall, their placards line a corridor. And inside the large carpeted pool, a group of women of many races and ages sit organising, chatting, reading and knitting. It's the first time any of them have been on strike; there's a feeling of solidarity; a feeling of rebellion against their status. "You've got a tag stuck round you; you're a typist and that's it" said one woman. The strike has made them question that attitude.

This strike is the first spark of what, if they win, could be an explosion. For the shortage of skilled office staff, with its attendant burden of overwork on many women, has been critical for five years and is increasing. If unions begin to back women's claims, as NALGO has done here, who knows what could happen. Curious really that compositors (male) get £9,000 a year for doing roughly similar work to the Camden typists, on about £3,000.□

Clare Cherrington

WOMEN INSPECTORS at a GEC factory in Coventry have won equal pay at last, after losing two cases in industrial tribunals. GEC backed down at the appeal stage of the second case . . . because the women took so many inspectors as witnesses to the court that they effectively stopped work at the factory!□

PORN, says the Director of Public Prosecutions, interviewed in the West Yorks police paper, should be treated as a case of assault . . . on the ordinary family *man*. Presumably he thinks it's the ordinary family woman who buys it for the pictures of bound, beaten, raped and humiliated men?

PSEUDO-HOMOSEXUALITY in feminist students is a new disease discovered by American psychiatrists. A paper in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* says that all psychologists agree that *real* homosexuals are made in childhood, but that "obsessive" and impressionable young women who can't come to terms with men or with leaving home can be swayed by the "dogma" of Women's Liberation into trying to be lesbian against their natures.□

SPUC IN THE DOCK

Phyllis Bowman, director of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, has been charged with breaching electoral law at the Ilford North by-election this year. SPUC distributed a leaflet indicating the views of all the candidates on abortion. Only one, the Tory candidate, stated that she was anti-abortion. According to the law, all propaganda distributed during an election must be attributable to a particular candidate and accounted for in the overall total of election expenses submitted by the candidate. The intention of the law is to prevent any one party buying its way to power because of its easier access to large sums of money. But it has important implications for other political organisations who want to make themselves heard at election time.

The law is pretty unclear about what is and is not allowed. As far as we can gather a national campaign could get away with distributing material across the country provided it does not specifically refer to a particular candidate. Certainly none of the employers' organisations protesting about nationalisation has yet been prosecuted. However, local groups could not make use of such material to draw attention to the record of MPs in their own constituency, unless they get the material adopted by a candidate who would then have to put his/her name on it and declare it as an election expense.

For example, the projected National Abortion Campaign election poster could probably be used by local NAC groups, provided they did not add information about specific candidates. They could, if they wished, ask candidates to use their material, though this would call their independence into question, so it is unlikely to be a very useful option.□

Lauriston Women's Arts Week, Scotland by Fanny Tribble

[redacted]

Pill boycott

The technical and managerial union ASTMS has a novel sanction up its sleeve against Wyeth, the drug manufacturer currently refusing to act on an ACAS recommendation to recognise union members at Taplow, Maidenhead.

The union has called on the DHSS, one of Wyeth's biggest customers, to intervene in the dispute with commercial director Peter Fennimore, described by ASTMS official Roger Lyons as "the George Ward of the drug industry". If Wyeth won't give in, ASTMS may ask women members to boycott the firm's contraceptive Pills. There are equivalent Pills marketed by other manufacturers. They are: Eugynon 50 for Wyeth's Ovran; Eugynon for Ovran 30; Microgynon for Ovranette.□

CUBA: Young women of the world

The XIth World Festival of Youth and Students took place in Cuba in July–over 16,000 young people from 125 countries meeting for "anti-imperialist solidarity, peace and friendship". About one third of the British delegation of 176 were women, and a dozen of us met regularly to prepare leaflets on the women's movement in Britain; to discuss our contributions to the meetings and to organise a women's social event.

The festival focused on peace/detente, imperialism, new international economic order, struggles in capitalist countries, education and science. There were sessions on each major area daily throughout the week but sadly the format didn't allow for questions and discussion. A day was given over to women in the 'struggles in capitalist countries' and 'education and science' series. Many women felt this was insufficient and that the next festival should spend more time on women, possibly making this one of the central themes.

Women rarely spoke for their delegation, except at the women's sessions where virtually all the contributions came from women, almost all from the women's organisations of their countries. The speeches of women from the 'Communist bloc' stressed their full equality under their constitutions, and the effort the state makes to integrate them into society (ie paid labour) through nursery provision and so on. They also stressed the central role of the family in society and did not attack sexism as such. West European women criticised this, saying women need to confront their continuing oppression and be free to make their own decisions about their lives, fertility and sexuality (a ripple of disquiet spread through the hall when our speaker mentioned lesbians). Women from Latin America and Africa, though aware of the need for feminist ideas to be put into practice, tended to say that for them the primary struggle must be to liberate all of their people from the repressive regimes they combat.

These sessions were mildly informative of the often appalling situations in many countries but the informal discussions were the most useful. We met several times with women of the Federation of Cuban Women (83% of all Cuban women are members). They stressed that it was not a 'feminist' but a mass organisation, working mainly towards the integration of women into the workforce–so far 30% of Cuban women are in paid jobs, over double the pre-Revolution figure. They say how ideas have changed about women's employment and about shared responsibility for housework (everyone knows it should be happening under the 1974 Family Code, but most see that many men are still not taking this responsibility). But they don't seem to be active on the question of machismo, nor do they challenge the family.

The festival as a whole, particularly the meetings with women, gave us all a tremendous feeling of international solidarity and made us aware of the need to support liberation struggles in other countries. □

Nicola Murray and Hester Watson

The African National Congress women's organisation plans to build a creche for the use of mothers engaged in the liberation struggle and a school in Tanzania for children forced to leave South Africa, particularly Soweto. They need funds and clothes. Contact ANC, 28 Penton St, London N1 (01-837 2012).

Incompetent abortions

Over one million abortions have been performed in Britain since 1967, and 86 women have died. A small percentage but worrying nevertheless. Particularly as 72 of them were National Health Service patients. So statistically a woman is six times more likely to die having an NHS abortion than if she had a private abortion.

Professor Peter Huntingford, who is both chairman of the charity Pregnancy Advisory Service in London and responsible for an NHS out-patient abortion service in East London believes that the discrepancy is directly attributable to incompetence. NHS doctors are relatively inexperienced compared to their counterparts in the private sector; delays and long waiting lists often lead to later and so more dangerous abortions; there is a tendency to use inappropriate and outmoded techniques, and sterilisation operations are often combined with abortion–a procedure which has long been known to be dangerous.

While it is no less necessary to continue campaigning for free NHS abortion services available to all, these figures underline the fact that the quality of NHS services is just as important as the quantity. □

The cross we bear...

Did you know that you could be contravening the Geneva Conventions if you use "for any purpose whatsoever, the emblem or designation 'Red Cross' "? The National Abortion Campaign recently got a letter from the British Red Cross Society pointing out that their badge is "liable to misinterpretation by members of the public as has been demonstrated by several comments received at this office". The letter suggested that the colour red, used in the symbol, could perhaps be changed to green or blue. NAC, understandably reluctant to change to a blue badge, have been gently warned that the question is one on which "only a court can decide".

In case you're wondering what this symbol could be, we reproduce it below. The disputed NAC badge uses it in red, on a rust colour background. It seems a little odd that the Red Cross has not yet discovered it in use internationally–in red on a white background–for the last ten years. So watch out sisters, you may be taken for an ambulance (and that's illegal). □

1,206 WOMEN from the Irish Republic, where abortion is illegal, are known to have had abortions in Britain in the first six months of this year, a rise of 15% on the same period last year. Figures, issued by the British Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, show a steady rise over the past three years. □

Licence to coil

IUD manufacturers will have to get a licence from the DHSS before marketing new devices from the autumn. Only IUDs with a chemical rather than mechanical action are currently included within the scope of the 1968 Medicines Act.

The new measures should go some way towards avoiding the tragedies associated with the use of the Dalkon Shield. This device, a nasty little beetle shaped piece of plastic with claws, was enthusiastically taken up by doctors several years ago. It was the first of the 'new generation' IUDs specifically developed for women who had never been pregnant. Its shape ensured that it would not be easily rejected but it turned out to have an unpleasant habit of embedding itself in the uterine lining often causing complications, sometimes leading to death. It has since been withdrawn from the British market.

New devices will now have to have proper clinical trials before

ARGENTINA: Feminist seized

On 28 June Ana Maria Piffarotti became one more of Argentina's 'disappeared persons'. Since the military coup two years ago, thousands of Argentinians have been kidnapped, tortured, imprisoned and executed, in a "dirty war" against "terrorism". The Argentinian military are now trying to arouse a nationalist reaction against international criticism of their repression of human rights.

Ana Maria Piffarotti is a feminist who worked as a dietician in several hospitals in Buenos Aires and Cordoba, doing research about women's health and their situation as health workers.

The military government is trying to set up a state-sponsored women's movement, partly in response to the way that the mothers, wives and sisters of prisoners have been using their position as women to organise open opposition to the regime. Independent feminists are now more than ever in danger; Ana Maria came out strongly against the government's women's project, and was taken away from the hospital by the Federal Police. Since then the authorities have denied all knowledge of her. And they are still trying to rope in women to whitewash their criminal behaviour. *Para ti*, a leading women's magazine has been urging housewives to send postcards with Argentinian flags to the critics abroad, telling them that all's well in Argentina . . . □

Please contact Women for Argentina, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1 if you'd like to sign a letter of protest to the Argentine authorities, or to adopt her as a political prisoner.

AUSTRALIA: More arrests

As we reported last month, 41 people were arrested in Brisbane, Queensland during a Women's Liberation rally in July. As street marches are banned in Queensland and 40 women were arrested in Brisbane on International Women's Day (*SR* 70), this rally decided not to risk a march–but police waded in anyway, charging people with using obscene language and resisting arrest.

In Sydney on 24 June, 53 people–half of them women–were arrested on a big International Homosexual Day march. When the organisers changed the destination of the march, the police objected–but instead of ordering the crowd to disperse peacefully, they blocked both ends of the march and sent in 'flying wedges', dragging out marchers and trapping passers-by. Charges include participating in an illegal march, resisting arrest and offensive behaviour.

When 200 supporters later gathered outside the courthouse, riot police were called and seven more were arrested. □

Info from Cathy McFerran.

* hard cover, 6"x 8"
* 112 pages — 2 per week
* 4 pages of useful addresses & info
* blank pages at back for notes
* illustrated, printed in navy and orange on buff
* £1.25 from Spare Rib, using form below, £1.50 from shops

Please send me . . . . . copies of the 1979 Spare Rib Diary
I enclose a cheque/PO for £ . . . . . .
Make cheques payable to Spare Rib Ltd

NAME . . . . . .

ADDRESS . . . . . .

. . . . . .

To Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

being granted a licence. Existing devices will also need licences, probably by next spring. □

SCHERING, Britain's major contraceptive Pill manufacturer, may put more explicit warnings about the dangers on the packets from now on. *Not* to warn women off taking them, but as a result of legal action in Denmark, where 28 women who claim they became seriously ill from taking the Pill, are trying to sue drug companies, among them Schering. Lawyers think that clearer warnings would protect the drug companies against similar claims in this country. □

COFFEE AND TEA have just joined alcohol as beverages to be avoided during pregnancy. It has long been suspected that coffee affects the foetus. Now the American Centre for Science in the Public Interest has published a study showing that the equivalent of about four cups of coffee a day produces birth defects in rats. Dr Michael Jacobson, head of the CPSI, recommends that warnings be printed on all over-the-counter products which contain caffeine. They include coffee, tea and certain stimulant pills.

COW'S MILK is suspect too. The basic ingredient in most powdered baby milk, it has been found to be a major cause of colic in young babies and can also cause trouble for breast fed babies if their mothers consume large quantities of it. □

NEW ZEALAND Clinic bombed

The Sisters Overseas Service (SOS) in Auckland, New Zealand, is a feminist agency which has helped over 500 women get abortions in Australia since the New Zealand government passed its extremely restrictive abortion law which even forbids abortion in the case of rape (see *SR* 73). As well as providing counselling and referrals to sympathetic doctors, SOS accompanies women to the airport, helps them borrow money and provides them with a detailed description of what the abortion will be like and what symptoms to expect afterwards.

This Easter, SOS was burned to a shell–exactly two years after a similar fire destroyed the clinic in Epsom, NZ, which was then performing legal terminations.

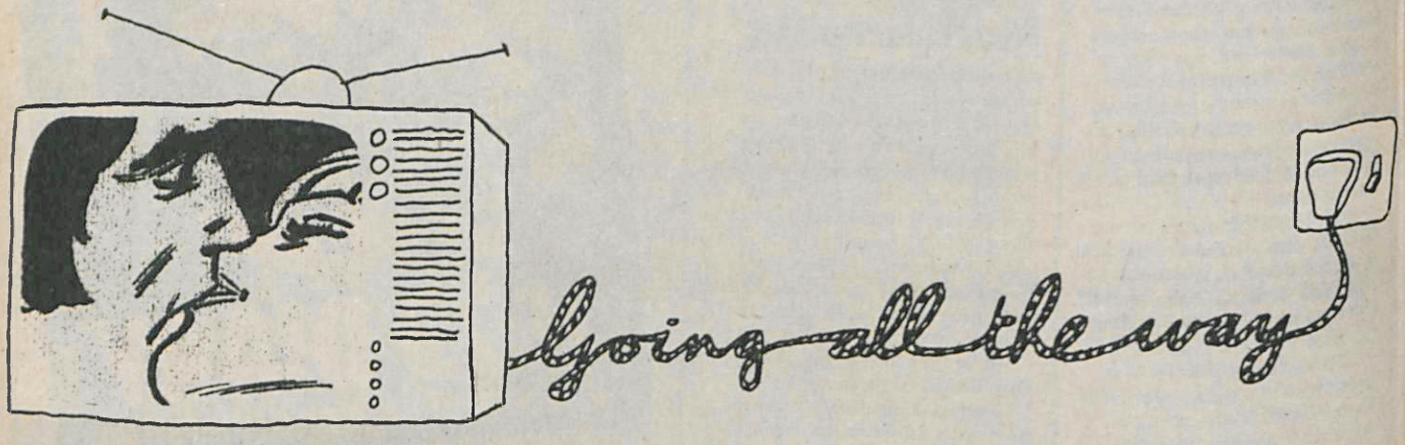
The choice of date suggests a religious motive; shortly after the 1976 explosion two Hare Krishna men blew themselves up in their own back yard and the arson investigation was wound down. But Auckland sisters are wary of blaming the fires on a few religious maniacs and letting the organised anti-abortion forces off the hook: "It may be stretching coincidence just too far to believe that anti-abortion 'cranks' in such diverse places as Auckland, Sydney and Boston all independently arrived at the idea of committing arson on their local abortion service".

SOS aren't letting the attack halt their plans for a complete health centre with groups working around self-help, childbirth, rape, menopause, menstruation, teenagers, self-image, sexuality and self-defence. They want their new premises to be brick, and in a well-lit area.

☆The situation in New Zealand has been described by one doctor as "a tragic shambles which has exceeded our worst fears". Of the four hospitals in Auckland licensed to carry out abortions, two have no operating surgeons, the third is a private hospital with facilities available only to doctors who regularly operate there, and the fourth has a few doctors willing to perform abortions.

Pressure is building up for liberalisation of the law, but a father of eleven is heading a 'Right to Life' party which intends to put up 40 anti-abortion candidates in the general election this year. □

Children aren't supposed to have sexual feelings. They are just apprentices, practising for the inevitable day when they will fall in love, marry, and have babies. In schools, they are given lessons to guide them on their way. Sara Rance, a part-time teacher and youth worker, is researching sexual socialisation, and here she examines some aspects of current sex education.



"Various awful things will happen to you, but never forget, my dear, the men like it."
Fifty years ago, a middle-aged woman gave her betrothed daughter these words of advice on the eve of her wedding; it was probably her first and last piece of sex education. My friend's mother told her, "You must be very careful of men now", as she handed her her first sanitary towel. No more, no less.

Today, in addition to euphemistic warnings from mothers, many children receive some kind of sex education in school. Sadly, however, it continues to reflect a double standard of morality for men and women, and does little to encourage girls to take a more exploratory and active view of their own sexuality. It preserves the view that sex is essentially for reproduction, reinforcing romanticised notions about marriage, and perpetuating antagonisms towards homosexuality and masturbation.

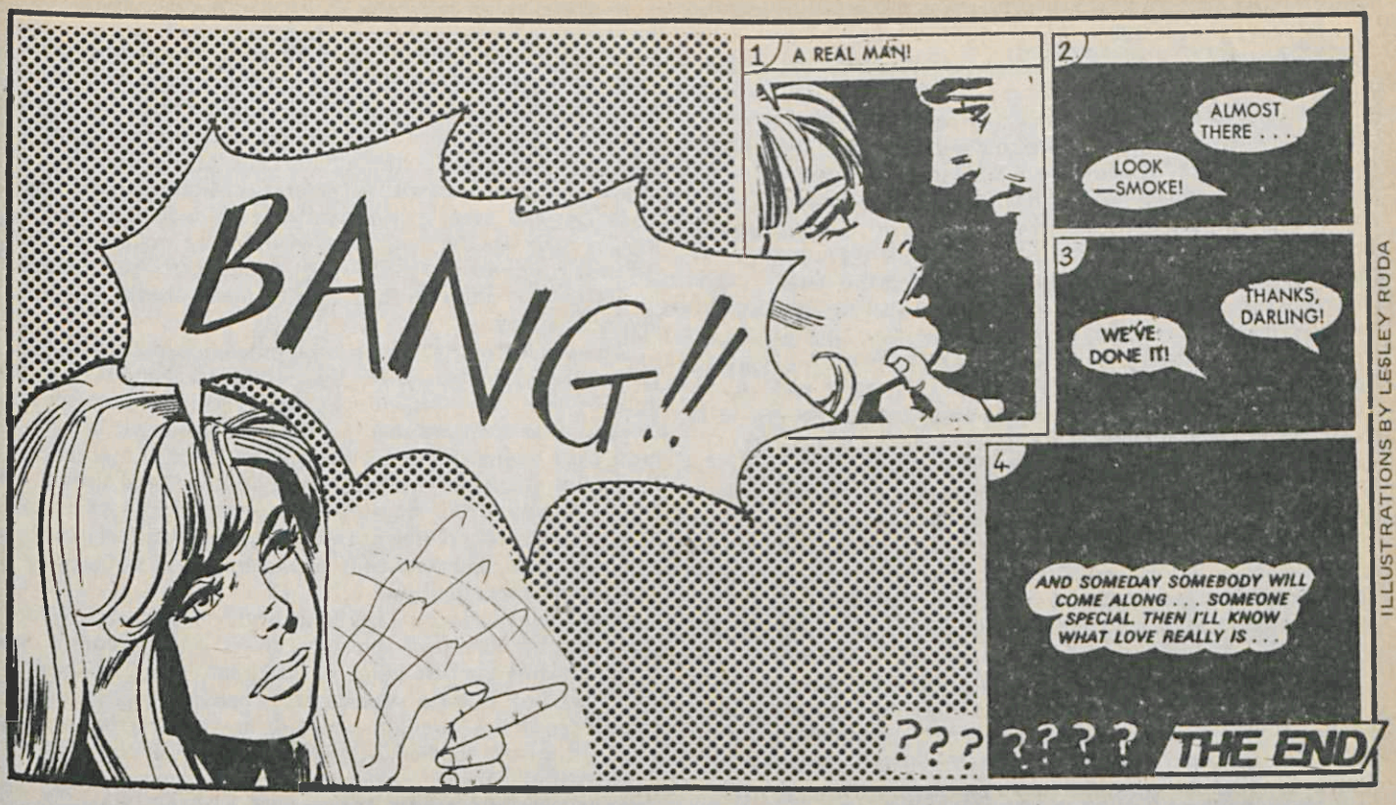
Children's sexual attitudes and knowledge are being patterned from an early age, and are moulded as much by the media, their friends, parents, and other adults, as by what they learn in school. However progressive or conservative the teaching, the 'facts of life' are not being written on a blank page: patriarchy has already made its indelible mark. Most girls by the time they are teenagers, have learned the ropes of female objectification – spots and fat must be got rid of periods kept hidden and secret, underarm and leg hair shaved, vaginal smells deodorized. "Give your eyes a rest and go around for a day or two without make-up. Try it when your fella's not around or he'll get the shock of his life." (*Jackie* magazine). How ironical that within the same magazine's pages anxieties should be created and 'problems' answered. And such problem pages often provide the most important and influential source of information for those girls who receive no sex education in their schools.

Feminists would like to see sex education taking account of all the many factors which condition our attitudes to our bodies, to sex and reproduction. It should provide an opportunity for children to challenge and question the view of women as sex objects, and the stereotypical roles of wives and mothers. But at present school sex lessons reinforce the assumption that biology is destiny.

From Mongolian Gerbils to Marriage

Sex education in schools crops up in all sorts of guises. It's hard to generalise about a subject which still isn't explicitly taught at all in many schools, and doesn't really exist on any curriculum in its own right. Usually it is incorporated into biology, social studies or religious education. Or it might take the form of an hour long lecture in a packed assembly hall, given by a marriage guidance counsellor or GP. And what the children are required to study may vary considerably, from the mating habits of Mongolian gerbils to Walt Disney's (only?) war film, *VD Attack Plan*. But where the lessons do not just consist of biological facts, about reproduction in the mammal, they become the scene of moral indoctrination. Government reports on education have repeatedly encouraged the conscious use of sex education to inculcate the values of chastity, marriage and family life. *The Crowther Report – 15 to 18* (1959), said, "To preserve the family in the future a conscious effort is needed by way of the educational system, on a much greater scale than has yet been envisaged." And the *Newsom Report* (1963, on 'average and below average' children) suggested that religious instruction should help boys and girls to find a firm base for sexual morality based on chastity before marriage, and fidelity within it, and also suggests that married teachers are best equipped to handle the teaching of sex education.

Many Local Education Authorities have produced similar reports. Some issued guidelines to teachers, in response to the media furore about the rape and murder of a little girl by a 12 year old boy – which the papers implied was the direct result of sex lessons at school. 'Boy killed after sex lessons' (*Daily Telegraph*, 29.9.77). Shropshire LEA, for instance, gave a five point guideline, the top two being that the family is to be regarded as the fundamental unit of society, and that children are to be taught that intercourse should only take place within marriage (*Shropshire Star*, 28.9.77). This particular incident provoked a huge response from parents, teachers and officials. On phone-ins and on letter pages people questioned the need for sex education at all. "Surely sex is natural instinctive behaviour, like eating, and doesn't require teaching?" A common fear, and perhaps a more reasonable one, was that it was being taught in an impersonal, clinical manner, without any reference to feelings and relationships. This was distorted and sentimentalised by the press and morality crusaders, who claimed that children must be taught how to love: "Storm over 'loveless' school sex . . . sex education which ignores morality and affection" (*Daily Telegraph*, 27.9.77). "Put love on the syllabus" (*Daily Mail*, 28.9.77). "The missing lesson was love" (*Evening News*, 27.9.77).



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LESLEY RUDA

No Sex, Please, We're Single

Extreme opponents of sex education, such as the Responsible Society, argue that it depraves and corrupts. They have recently attacked such respectable organisations as the FPA (who are now also involved in sex education) because they hold special young people's clinics. "There is a concerted effort by certain organisations to undermine the security of the family." A prevalent view is that children who are told about sex will immediately experiment, and that the availability of contraception encourages the young to be promiscuous. In the face of attacks such as these, workers in the field are constantly pushed into defensive positions, and it is hardly surprising that so little progress has been made in the content of sex education materials for children, or in the philosophy underlying them. Even the 'progressives' in the field seem constantly at pains to point out their reverence for marriage and the family. The fairly recent introduction of teaching about methods of contraception in a few schools has, like abortion, been justified not from a positive feminist standpoint, a woman's right to choose, but in terms of population control and prevention of unwanted (read 'illegitimate') pregnancy.

These, then, are the attitudes which characterise most recent publications, and school radio and TV broadcasts. Sex educators are still restricting the information they give to children to the life cycle, marriage and the family, possibly with the mention of VD as cautionary advice against both promiscuity and homosexuality (often the *only* context in which homosexuality is mentioned). Even the rare advocate of premarital (note the wording) sex holds marriage as the ultimate goal. At a recent conference on 'accepting adolescent sexuality', the main speaker, James Hemming, said that premarital sex contributes to a "mature capacity for physical love" which is " the basis of happy and enduring marriage and the foundation for loving homes for the next generation to grow up in". But what about those of us who choose to stay single? Who are gay, or widowed, or divorced? Sex educators still leave children to assume that such people have no legitimate outlet for their sexuality.

Boys Can't Help It

How pervasive is the view that sex is just for reproduction? It's surprising how many children even today are still under the impression that their parents have only had sex as many times as there are children in the family. For instance, one sixteen year old girl, when asked if she had ever seen or heard her parents making love, replied, "I was too young, there's only me and my brother that are the youngest, all the others are older – so I don't see how I could've."

Because sex education is so limited to this conceptual framework of reproduction, there is no place within it for basic information (let alone discussion) on such topics as masturbation, female arousal and orgasm, or homosexuality. For boys, it is possible that masturbation is explained as having the physiological function of relieving sexual tensions built up by the production of sperm – the common assumption being that male sexuality is somehow irrepressible. Female masturbation is rarely mentioned, confirming the belief that women have no autonomous sexuality, but are capable only of responding to male initiatives – and yet at the same time engendering (irrepressible) sexual desire in the male. This latter continues to be held against them – the seductress Eve being responsible for Adam's fall. And this 'original sin' is still used to absolve male responsibility for rape, and to counsel girls to be modest. Even the latest Department of Education Report (1977) on Health Education says, "Girls should also understand that they may inadvertently impose great stresses on boys by arousing sexual reactions in them which they do not fully comprehend and may not be able to control." Incidentally, the section on sex education is entitled, 'School and the Future Parent'.

The vast majority of sex education books treat 'sex' as synonymous with heterosexual intercourse: yes, it is necessary for reproduction, and also conveniently well suited to the sexual gratification of the heterosexual male, but female arousal and orgasm may play no part in this process, and hence can be easily omitted, both in the classroom and in bed. It is staggering how many teenage girls are unaware of the existence of the clitoris, or the possibility of female orgasm. Even a book reprinted in 1977 fails to include the clitoris in its diagram of the female sexual organs (K. Elgin 1977).

The stress on sexual intercourse as the be all and end all of sex is not only heterosexist, it also misleads many girls into the expectation that penetration will be their primary and ultimate source of physical pleasure. In fact we know that only a minority of women achieve orgasm during intercourse. And yet millions of us continue to feel confused, guilty and inadequate because we find petting, significantly known as fore-play, more physically satisfying than intercourse itself. In addition to the obvious fear of pregnancy, this may explain why many girls are reluctant to 'go all the way', and may well be very disappointed when they do so. Meanwhile the male interpretation of this reluctance is 'prick teasing'. ▶

Sex for Pleasure

This emphasis on heterosexual intercourse as *the* valid sexual activity also leads to a striking silence on the subject of homosexuality, or, in cases where it is mentioned, endless cautions and warnings. The DES (*Health Education Report*, 1977) blatantly encourages sex educators to sweep the subject under the carpet, to deal with it "in passing, if and when it arises", and definitely not to go into it on a deeper level, except for undertaking the essential task of guiding any wayward youngsters back onto the path to the altar. And can you imagine a sex education book which refers to heterosexuality as a phase which will usually pass as you get older? "Nobody really knows why heterosexuality develops in some people . . . It's a mistake to assume you're heterosexual on the basis of occasional heterosexual feelings, and it's a mistake to push yourself towards heterosexuality because of them. Wait until you're sure, otherwise you could cause yourself a lot of unhappiness and confusion. . Replace 'hetero' with 'homo' and you have what *Will I Like It?* published in 1978, has to say on the subject. This particular manual may be a slight improvement in that it no longer describes homosexuality as a sickness, but it's still a far cry from 'glad to be gay'.

Like homosexuality, masturbation is presented not as a valid expression of sexuality in its own right, but as a phase of adolescence, fairly harmless unless it persists into adulthood, when it might begin to inhibit the development of 'healthy' and 'productive' heterosexual relationships. The DES *Health* Education Report (1977) refers to it as "an inevitable but transient part of sexual awareness", "innocuous" but "infantile" This is in total harmony with these words of comfort offered in *Sex and the Young Teenager* (1978):

"A few simple precautions . . . will help the need pass more quickly."

"A rugged game of tennis or football . . . will focus your attention elsewhere . . . helping you to get over the more difficult moments."

Since the so-called 'sexual revolution' of the sixties, the do-your-own thing approach has occasionally emerged in sex education books. It is a highly questionable approach from the feminist perspective, because although it does acknowledge non-reproductive and extra-marital sex, it tends to glamorise sexual activity and ignore sexual inequality. In advocating the 'free expression' of sexual needs and fantasies, it obscures the fact that most of these are socially constructed and thrive upon the sexual objectification and violation of women. *Will I Like It?* is such a book. "Something else to treat carefully the first time out is the smash-and-grab approach. If both of you feel like raping each other, fine, if not, an over-aggressive rush by either side can lead to an impossibly tense vagina or a lost erection." In its eagerness to highlight the pleasures of sex, it becomes glib, misleading and unrealistic. Sex is described as "the world's most popular indoor sport", and the following statement, too, could only have been written by a privileged male : "It's a physical fact that from the end of puberty to early adulthood you are at your most sexually potent. Orgasms come thick and fast, and you are capable of a level of sexual activity that is exhausting even to think about when you get older." Ageist, sexist, inaccurate, and so far removed from the experience of the average teenage girl as to seem quite ludicrous – this is precisely the kind of male attitude which makes women feel despairing and inadequate. Of course it is important that girls discover that their sexuality can be a source of pleasure, but it is unrealistic to expect that this can develop from an understanding of physiology and a grasp of techniques alone. The dependence and passivity which at present characterise female sexuality cannot be separated from women's general lack of autonomy.

Talking to Young People

So how *do* we get away from the reproductive view of sex? As a general rule it's worth trying constantly to make it clear to children that we have a *capacity* to reproduce, but that's not necessarily what our bodies are *for*.

It's all too easy to slide into "functionalist" explanations when describing physiology, especially as we often begin to talk to children about sex in response to the question "Where did I come from?" Another reason is that many girls often receive their first sex education around the time that their periods start, and it's almost impossible to explain menstruation without reference to reproduction! So bearing this in mind, it's good to bring out with children from a really early age the many ways in which we can use, or gain pleasure from our bodies: to work, to show affection, to make love, to make babies, so that reproduction is seen as a choice, and not destiny.

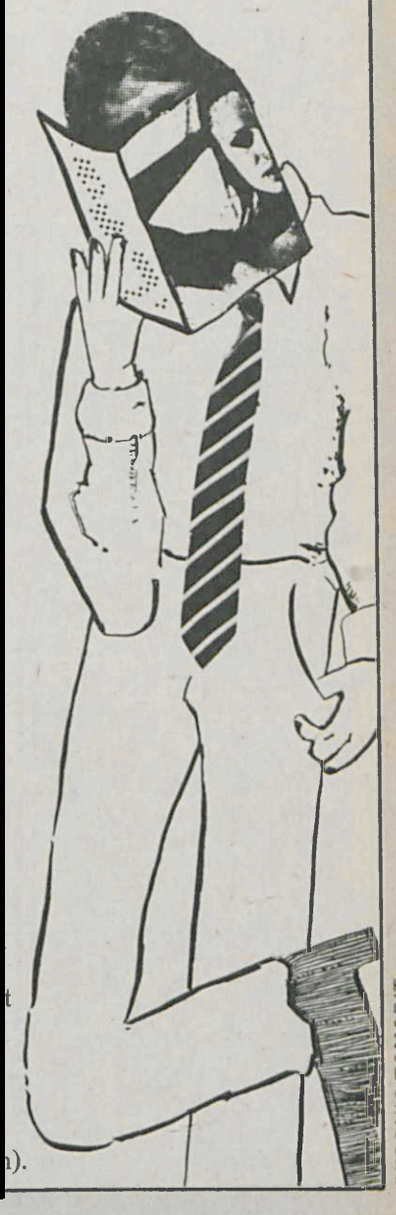
An ideal learning situation is the small informal group, preferably segregated by sex. No doubt segregation is frowned upon by many teachers and seen as old fashioned, but it leads to a lot more openness and honesty in discussion. It helps reduce the tendency of girls to feign ignorance or innocence, for fear of otherwise "losing their reputations" and also to reduce the amount of bragging and bravado from boys. Even so, girls are usually reluctant to say anything which might implicate them, and frequently questions will be prefixed by "my friend wants to know . . ."

Role playing games are useful in getting children to explore ideas and different ways of reacting to certain situations. You merely provide the bare bones of the situation and get them to improvise. For instance a conversation between a pregnant girl and her best friend, a boy pressurising his girlfriend to have sex, a girl discovering her sister is a lesbian, a visit to a family planning clinic. Teachers can gauge from the improvisations how much the children know about, for example, the symptoms of pregnancy, and fill in afterwards during discussion.

An idea drawn from experience within the women's liberation movement is self-examination: encouraging girls to look at their external sexual anatomy with a mirror, explaining the changes that take place during sexual arousal and orgasm and talking about masturbation. Whereas most boys are used to handling their penis when they pee, for girls looking and touching themselves "down there" is still regarded as "dirty", so they need some encouragement. However, girls *and* boys need information about female sexual response. The stress on penetration often provokes anxiety in boys about the size of their penis. It's useful for them to discover that this bears no relation to their ability to satisfy their partner, and that penetration is only one way, not the only way, and that the clitoris is far more sensitive than the vagina. It's also this penetration-centred view of sex which creates the mystery of "what lesbians do in bed", and the feeling of many girls that masturbation, apart from being "dirty" is a bit of a waste of time. Masturbation is probably one of the best ways that people can learn about their own sexual response, and it contributes to a sense of autonomy to discover that there are many ways of gaining sexual satisfaction. It is a step towards helping people to communicate with their partners, but it should be treated as a valid form of sexual expression in its own right.

As far as girls are concerned, it seems to me that a basic aim of good sex education must be to counter the sense of dependency on boys and men, and to move towards a greater physical and emotional autonomy. Of course, it is very hard to break through the prevailing feelings of romanticism (or cynicism) and emerge with a fighting spirit.

Despite the well-worn feminist slogan "the personal is political", and the assertion that we must have the right to define our own sexuality, it's surprising how easily the issue of sexuality gets side-stepped even within the women's liberation movement. And yet as women our personal identity and public image is tied up almost entirely with sex and reproduction. We learn that our bodies are our bread and butter, we learn that our capacity to reproduce and provide titillation and sexual servicing are our strongest selling points in the marriage market. Marriage and motherhood are still the "facts of life" that all girls are required to learn.



BEGONIA TAMARIT

Further Reading

It's not possible to enthuse about many of the books presently available, as even the best have serious drawbacks, not the least being their price! So if you're planning to buy books it's a good idea to find a shop with a wide selection and browse before buying. There's various things you can look out for; is the general approach of the book entirely reproductive? is 'clitoris' in the index and diagrams?, are masturbation and homosexuality described as'adolescent phases'? Will a child who thinks she or he may be gay find it reassuring, or off-putting? etc. Even then you'll probably have to use the material selectively and add to it, and it's best despite the embarrassment, not to merely give a book to a child, but to use it as a discussion point. Here's a list of a few of the more palatable ones. Those marked * are available from Compendium books, (240 Camden High St, London NW1. For mail order add 15% to cover postage [minimum 20p]).

Where Did I Come From Peter Mayle £2.25 1974 Michael Joseph. Under tens. Although this book is quite uninhibited, it gives the impression that sex happens only between a mummy and a daddy. And that everybody who has sex is in love with his/her partner. Of course this is only one of the many situations in which sex takes place – although I suppose it does provide one answer to "where did I come from?" But I wonder whether it would be better for little children not to be told anything about sex than for them to think it will all be lovey-dovey.

Lisa Bahaire 13 yrs

My New Sister Bo Jarner. Adam and Charles Black £1.25. all ages. Lovely book entirely of photographs of pregnant women, and birth of second child. Is unusual in showing father's involvement in birth and caring for baby, changing nappies etc.

Knowing About Sex Macmillan 1975 £3.00. 6 upwards. ed Dr. J. Hemming, Dr. Z. Maxwell. Very middle class. Format is discussion between mother father son and daughter. Perfect bodies, informative but patronising style.▶

Where Do I Come From? Claire Rayner 1974 Arlington Books. 45p. 8 upwards. Goes further than title would suggest. Informative mixture, though masturbation and homosexuality still seen as phases. Good points eg. suggests self examination for girls.

Little Blue Book 1977 ZiPrint Parchment (Oxf) Ltd, 50p. Written for students but suitable for all good readers. Straightforward, non-sexist, thorough. One of the best of its kind. Available from WOLS, c/o J. Weinberg, Osher Ho, 43 Woodstock Rd, Oxford, OX2 6HE.

Growing Up Gay Youth Liberation Pamphlet 65p. 1978 reprint*. Written by gay American high school students. All parents and children should read it. Only thing of its kind.

Boy Girl Man Woman Bent Claesson. Calder & Boyars £1.95*, shortly to be republished by Penguin in re-edited version. Teenagers (good readers). A lot of detailed factual information. Liberal and not too reproduction oriented but still heterosexist.

Will I Like It? Peter Mayle. W.H. Allen £3.50. Teenagers. See article for comments.

Girls and Sex Wardell B. Pomeroy. Pelican * 60p. Thorough and informative. Some good points mixed in with some very sexist assumptions.

Our Bodies Ourselves Boston Women's Health Book Collective £3.30 to be republished shortly by Penguin in English edition.

Women's Health Handbook Nancy MacKeith £1.95. Self help guide.*

Birth Control Handbook*

VD Handbook*

The above four publications are really excellent, feminist, informative, well illustrated. Although written for adults most teenagers would get a lot from browsing in them.

Sara Rance

Make it Happy – What Sex is All About Jane Cousins Virago 1978*. Stop Press – this book has just come out! See Reviews Section.

Other related information

Teachers in Leeds area: Women working for Area Health Authority have compiled teaching resource packs, available from Health Education Library. So far: contraception; sexually transmitted diseases; growing up and relationships. Suitable for 13 years upwards. Non-sexist, non-racist, packs include films, charts, handouts, etc.

Resources List produced by same women. Contact Al Garthwaite, Health ed. Section, Leeds AHA (teaching), 8 Park Square, Leeds 1.

London Women Youth Workers. Some of us are currently working on pamphlets aimed at teenage girls. So far topics include virginity, visiting clinics, periods. Non-sexist and non-racist. Hoping to be able to distribute widely, depending on financial help being forthcoming. We'd like to hear from others doing similar work. More information from Claire Montgomery, 16B Forest Drive West, London E11.

FPA Sex Education Resources List £1.00. Useful though by no means comprehensive list of books, films, TV and radio broadcasts, tape slide sets etc. Available from FPA, 27-35 Mortimor Street, London W1N 7RJ. **FPA Bookshop** same address.

Sara Rance

THREE POEMS

By Penelope Gouk

Dear *Spare Rib*,
Looking at the August edition of *Spare Rib*, I found that the drawings by Norma Pitfield of her mother near to death evoked for me strong memories of my grandmother. She lived with us all through my childhood but it was mainly during my 'teens that the relationship between the three of us, myself, my mother and her mother, grew particularly tense. I became very aware of the complicated range of emotions that it was possible to feel towards blood relatives, and I fluctuated between a violent hatred of my grandmother and extreme compassion and pity for her as a strong, proud woman who was frightened of death and knew that her time was running out.

I wrote these poems when I was about 15, that is about seven years ago, and although they were written then I still feel that they are valid in their expression of my feelings at the time. I regret to say that although at the time I wrote a lot of poetry, once I had suffered an A Level course of English Literature, I was no longer able to express myself in poetry as I felt very self-conscious of the style and so forth. So these poems are some of the last that I wrote.

Each day the tape plays itself out
unwinds again; rewinds at night
the battery recharged, energy renewed
to expand itself exhaustively
in the fray
the fight
the hurting, smarting fighting
next day.

We three are the eternal triangle
Grandmother
mother and daughter
entwined together inextricably.
I can't get out or break myself loose
or slice the cheese that is pressed harder each day
— curds and whey
I am the holes that the cheese goes round
I am the hair on the brush that you throw away.

Grandmother whispering in the chair, her eyes are closed now.
Rabbit on the floor
bird in the cage
dog on her lap
silence on the radio and
tears in my eyes.
I want to go away to be myself
please let me go
cut the cord that binds me to you
through my mother
sever the knot
unlink the chain
and let me be free.

Tooth & Nail

CHELSEA COLLEGE
University of London

B.Sc. Examination

NEUROENDOCRINE PHARMACOLOGY
Course No.0647

WEDNESDAY, 24 May, 1978: 2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Answer ONE question

Write an essay on one of the subjects given

1. Hormones, cyclic nucleotides and long term memory.
2. Synaptogenesis and the sexual differentiation of the brain.
3. Peptides and behaviour.
4. "Womens' Liberation" - a neuroendocrine disorder?
5. Is schizophrenia an endocrine disease?
6. Depressive illness and the contraceptive pill.
7. The hormonal basis of infertility.
8. Neuroendocrinology and courtship rituals.

Sent in by Esther Saraga, London NW5.

WHO TO ATTACK ABOUT SEXIST ADS:
the manufacturers of the product and/or the agency who make up the ad.
WHO TO COMPLAIN TO:
The Independent Broadcasting Authority for ITV ads and programmes, 70 Brompton Road, London SW9.
The Advertising Standards Authority, though notoriously unresponsive to complaints about sexism, 15 Ridgmount Street, London WC1.
WHO TO WORK WITH:
AFFIRM (Alliance for Fair Images and Representation in Media). A group acting against sexism and offensive stereotyping, can be contacted c/o Women's Arts Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1.
THE NATIONAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS
Send a letter of complaint about sexist material to: The Mother or Father of the NUJ Chapel at the publication concerned, with a copy to the editor, and to the Equality Working Party, NUJ, Acorn House, 314 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

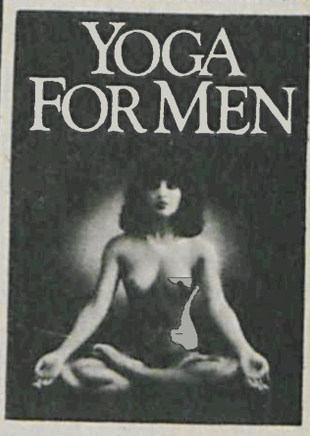
keep on sending them in!

Sent in by Ralph Jones and Stephen Wood, Guildford.

The hard lessons of the past are written in the language of hedge-banks and crop-marks, place-names, street-plans and earthworks. Here is engraved the passing of the generations, as each built upon the legacy of its predecessors. Farming, craft and building skills developed. Fathers instructed sons, sons bore grandsons;

Article entitled 'Village Vasectomy' in *Sunday Times Colour Supplement*. Sent in by Carole, Bristol.

THE BOOKSELLER, FEBRUARY 11, 1978



Yoga for Men
An unusual and amusing approach to Yoga.
64pp. 318 x 235 mm, hardback; dramatic full-colour photographs throughout.

"*Girl Friends* is a warm perceptive and disarming movie ...a winning performance by Melanie Mayron..." – *Playboy Magazine*

"Melanie Mayron is warm and funny, human and lovable." – *Cosmopolitan*

"A stunning success... often very funny... a compassionate portrait..." – *Charles Champlin, L.A. Times*

girl friends AA

Cyclops films presents a film by Claudia Weill. **"Girl Friends"**
starring. Melanie Mayron. *featuring.* Anita Skinner, Eli Wallach, Christopher Guest, Bob Balaban, Gina Rogak, Amy Wright, Viveca Lindfors, & Mike Kellin.
produced & directed by. Claudia Weill. *co-producer.* Jan Saunders.
screenplay. Vicki Polon. *story.* Claudia Weill & Vicki Polon. *music.* Michael Small.

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FROM SEPT 28
GATE TWO CINEMA · nr. RUSSELL SQUARE
Tel. 837·8402 / 837·1177

Diary of a Feminist Teacher

In May last year, Kate Elliott took on a part-time 'supply' teaching job in a girls' comprehensive school. Much of her work was in social studies, with a group of fourth year girls waiting to leave. This group disliked school intensely, and were locked in a mutual antagonism with most of the teachers.

Kate decided to keep a diary of her progress with this class, because she felt that the power relationships between herself and the girls were something she wanted to work out within the context of her commitment to feminism. These are some of the extracts from the notebook she kept.

The First Lesson

1977 may

The hostility met me like a perspex wall -- 23 individual versions of it.

Me: I hear you've had quite a rough time this year.

Yvonne: We're the class they all talk about in the staffroom — like that Miss Robinson. We give her hell.

Trisha: No good giving me detentions, I've got ten a week already — can't fit any more in.

Yvonne: Can we stand up in your class? Like we get really bad if they try to make us sit down in rows.

Margaret was combing her hair, her back towards me. Most of the others were talking to each other. So I thought, they're testing me, keep calm . . . but I've done ten years in this job, and what have I learnt? Who am I?

Me: Look, we've got nine weeks together and I've no wish for it to be hell every lesson. Why shouldn't you walk around? I do. Stand on your heads if you need to. We need to talk to each other. We don't know each other.

Although Kate's job was supposed to end after those nine weeks, it was offered again to her from the next September, and so she became their teacher again, this time in their fifth and final year of compulsory schooling. And so she continued her diary.

1977 september

Youth unemployment now began to force its way into the consciousness of the girls.

Eileen: What's the point of doing all this work in school? It isn't going to make it any more likely I'll get a job. I've got three friends with 'O' levels and CSE's who are black like me, and they're all unemployed. They'll just have me up for an interview with six white girls, they'll see me . . . and it's the blacks who get no jobs.

It seems to me that the whole 'education debate' has successfully deflected criticism away from who controls industry, and from the economic crisis (of which youth and black unemployment are two aspects), onto the schools, seeing the blame as the failure of teachers to provide young people with the 'correct' skills and attitudes for the 'needs of industry'.

Streaming divides up the girls in this school in both obvious and subtle ways, and the girls themselves have ambivalent attitudes to it. This group regard the top streamers as foolish, giving too much time and effort to the school. Yet it isn't unusual for bottom streamers to spend whole evenings working on school projects which interest them. Girls in the top stream regard the others as disruptive and unwilling to learn, yet envy them for their time and boyfriends. But for all of them the illusion of choice of employment is maintained, in spite of the fact that neither 'O' levels, nor CSE's are guarantees against setbacks and disappointments under the current unemployment situation.

At about this time Kate began to talk to other teachers who might be feeling the same way as she did. Most sympathy was to be found among teachers in the English and Remedial departments, and not insignificantly this arose out of their focus upon *talking* in the classroom.

1977 october

This is an all-girls school, but the girls were always focussing their attention on boys.

Una: (while working on a project about housing), Miss, what would you wear to go with a brown pleated skirt?

Me: Why?

Una: There's this dishy boy who's not like the ordinary ones, slobbing around in jeans — he wears suits and he's smart.

Me: Why not dress as you usually do?

Una: I've got to impress him — you've got to catch him first.

Yvonne and Trisha arrived ten minutes later

Me: Hey, you're taking me for granted because I'm nice to you.

Trisha: What do you mean?

Trisha cont: Now you look here, Miss. We're only ten minutes late. You should think yourself lucky, we're ever so good to you. Look at all this work — pages and pages.

(She showed me her project and Yvonne did the same.)

Me: You mean I'm privileged because it's only ten minutes,

and that I should count my blessings?
Trisha: Yes, you expect too much.

I am very aware of the problem of my control over them. I view it as part of my work to enable them to make a critical examination of their position and mine. I don't want them to see me as one of their pals, because that could blur their awareness of all the structures in school which reproduce power relationships, dominating them here, at home and in their future work. If you discuss explicit aspects of domination with the girls, you are immediately viewed as a subversive by the prevailing hierarchy here.

1978 january

Elizabeth came boiling into the lesson.
Elizabeth: Miss, did you see 'The South African Experience' on TV? I was so angry. The way the blacks are treated there. This woman was given the sack after 23 years and no reason, and the white man in the car factory saying the blacks live like that. Well, my mum's a nurse, and she has to bow to the matron above her, treated like dirt because she's black, and she's brought me up never to take it. If I was in South Africa I'd want to fight. I'm not just angry — I can't explain how I feel. I'd just want to explode. I know not all the blacks even want a revolution, but me, I would. I'd want to die for it. But they wouldn't let me in — they only let whites in. And they put us down over here as well. I know you shouldn't lump all whites together, but *we're* all lumped together, especially here in school. I don't agree with fighting for the sake of it — you've got to know what you're fighting for.
This was the first time that she had explained her ideas so strongly and we met here emotionally and intellectually in a way not previously achieved. How can I make this happen more frequently?

Elizabeth is called the following things in the staffroom: troublemaker, disruptive, thick, thoroughly unpleasant, remedial, immature. Two weeks later: Elizabeth is suspended for a fortnight, following an incident of 'uncooperativeness' in another lesson. Her English teacher and I negotiate on her behalf whenever we can. Decide who you are, find others like you, and then fight.

1978 february

Linda: Miss, if one of us was to tell you she was pregnant, what would you do?
Me: I'd help her all I could. Why?
Linda: Would you tell her parents for her?
Me: Yes, I'd go to the clinic as well. I'd do whatever I could.
Linda: Well, we've been going together for two years. My doctor would kill me, he said to go on the pill after I was 16, but I never did. My boyfriend says he'll stand by me — we're engaged, but . . . I don't know. I just had to tell somebody.

Later: Linda has now found out that she is not pregnant. She left at Easter as she'd already been promised a job as a dental nurse, which she'd been doing on Saturdays for ages. Most of the girls already do a great deal of domestic work, taking a very large part in running the home along with their working mothers. All have a large amount of it built into their lives, and some, like Una, run their homes without a mother. Most are anticipating early marriage and motherhood in spite of the resistance they already feel to these stereotypes.

Eileen: We have lots of housework to do. Every night me and Angela take turns with the washing up. It's me tonight.
Me: Do the boys do it?
Eileen and Frances: No! They don't do anything — we do it all. I often think it's us waiting on them while they watch TV. We've always had to do it.
Now the group is splitting into Easter leavers, and those who are staying to take the June CSE exam. The first group mark time — school is even more irrelevant. They are making some tape recordings about their feelings about school, and what they expect of the future. And the second group are slogging away at revision. This means we are controlled by the imminence of the exam, and have no more time for free discussions.

1978 march

We've got problems over the tape recording. The girls had talked about their past, present and future sexuality and the head has asked me to stop this work, on the grounds that further taping would be construed as deliberately soliciting this material. All radical teachers walk on a tightrope, and feminist teachers trying, like me, to create spaces with young women to talk about our own issues and problems face a particularly painful and exhausting struggle.

1978 may

The revision group is now approaching their exam — it's half term and we're all at screaming point. So we've changed back again to a less constraining content, using role play as our revision method, and this has, on the surface, eased our situation.

Last lesson: a visit to the Old Bailey. And on the steps of St Pauls, they hand me a card saying, "Remember us? Love from . . ."

june

We are beginning to form a women's group among the teachers here. When we first put up a notice about it in the staff room, a male colleague replaced it by a clever negative cartoon. One of the men had drawn a picture of a group of women tied onto chairs with books on their laps, with the captions, 'Shoulder to Shoulder' and 'Forced Reading' — there was little doubt who those women were meant to be.

Our group now consists of open and closed meetings. We have designed a liberal studies (women's studies) course which includes the study of misconceptions of women, violence, work, domestic labour, and other cultures. The closed group, of about six, meets for consciousness raising, and it looks as though another parallel group may start.

The girls we have worked with have been crucial in the formation of our group identity — and the contradiction is that these girls are not part of our group. Nor are the other women workers in the school. I want to do something about that. But in any case, we are at the beginning of an exciting new phase. ■

SHORT LIST

INFORMATION TO ANNY BRACKX
27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE
LONDON EC1

Talks and Conferences

Women and Education
Discussion meetings for women who are feminists and interested in education. All starting at 8.00.
20 September. At 110 Cavendish Rd, West Didsbury, Manchester. Topic: childcare.
18 October. At 29 Corkland Rd, Chorlton, Manchester. Topic: Women's Studies.
22 November. At 10 Barker's Lane, Sale. Topic: basic skills.

International Women's Festival
20-25 September. 6pm-2am every day at the Melkweg, Lijnbaansgracht 234A, Amsterdam (020-241777). On Thur, Fri, and Sat the festival is for women only. During the day the Women's Cafe in the Melkweg is open every day 1-5pm (to be reached from the Marnixstraat 409, opp Bellevue-Cinerama) "We are trying to find a combination of politics and play, work and joy." There will be music, theatre, films, exhibitions, information stands, as well as workshops. Themes: Thur the Dutch women, Fri the lesbian woman, Sat the international women's movement. Creche available and accommodation can be arranged.

International Campaign for Abortion Rights
23 September. Meeting in Brussels to co-ordinate the International day of action (in April next year) around the slogan 'A Woman's Right to Contraception and Abortion. No Forced Sterilisation'. Details from ICAR c/o National Abortion Campaign, 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1. (01-485 4303).

Women and Religion
23 September. Conference 10.30 at Notting Hill Methodist Church, Lancaster Rd, London W11. Workshops on roles in the family, feminist theology, the nature of oppression, the contribution of lay and ordained women in the church. Details from Barbara Holden, 146 Windsor Rd, London E7 (01-472 2276).

Glasgow Women and Science Collective
27 September. 7.30 at Glasgow Women's Centre, 57 Miller St. Inaugural meeting for all women working in scientific fields or interested in science and technology.

Selina Cooper Suffragist
29 September. Feminist History Group talk 7.30 at the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (check with 01-703 5275). Speaker Jill Liddington (co-author *One Hand Tied Behind Us*).

Women, Politics and Political Science
30 September. Conference 11.00-5.00 at Bedford College, London NW1. Details from Ann Bone, 32 Parliament Hill, London NW3. Fee £1.

The East London Federation of Suffragettes
1 October. Talk 3.00 at the National Museum of Labour History, Limehouse Town Hall, Commercial Rd, London E14. Speaker Maggie Millman. Details from 01-515 3229.

Women and Mental Health Group
4 October. Meeting 7.00 at Flat P, Pugin Court, 285 Liverpool Rd, N1 to set up regular weekly discussion meetings, as well as actions. Details from 01-268 4884 ex.489 or 01-460 2843 (home).

Women and Socialism: the Bolsheviks and the Third International
6 October. WRRC talk 8.00 at the WRRC, as above. Speaker Alix Holt.

Women and Job Problems
6/20 October. Meeting 12.30-2.30 at Lewisham Women's Centre, 74 Deptford High St, London SE8 (01-692 1851). For women concerned with equal rights and opportunities, and solving problems affecting working women.

East Anglian Women's Weekend
7/8 October. Starting 11.00 at Wensum Lodge, King St, Norwich. Saturday workshops on women and the economy, education, health, the welfare state, motherhood, revolutionary feminism; Sunday bodywork etc. Creche, accommodation available. Adm. £1 (50p unwaged). Details from Gill Sandall, 101 Shipfield, Norwich (0603-413603).

Women's History
13/27 October. Feminist History Group discussion on research and resources 7.30 at the WRRC, as above. Contributions and problems welcome.

National Conference on Rape
14/15 October. At Waldorf School, Park Place, Clifton, Bristol. Workshops on rape and race, law reform, pornography, prostitution, domestic violence, reclaiming the night, rape crisis centre training programmes and rape crisis centre politics, dealing with street harassment, police and courts, reporting rape in the media, and the need for a national federation of rape groups. All other suggestions welcome. "Our hope is that in the light of collective experience we can clarify feminist theory and politics on sexual violence and make the campaign more effective." Papers should be sent typed on A4 stencils by 20 September. Register in advance (£3 or £1.50 for unwaged) with ARG, Women's Centre, 44 The Grove, Bristol 1 (0272-22760).

Women and Weight
19 October. Talk 7.30 at the EGA Hospital, Euston Rd, London NW1. With Susie Orbach and EGA doctors. All women welcome. Contact 01-582 0009 if baby-sitting is needed.

Women and Politics
20 October. WRRC talk 7.30 at the WRRC as above. Speaker Judy Evans (Queen Mary College, London).

Campaigns

Attacks on Gays
The National Council for Civil Liberties is conducting a survey into the nature and extent of physical and verbal attacks on gays. So far about 80 people aged between 16 and 74 have responded, including a high proportion of women, thus destroying the myth that only gay men are liable to be attacked. NCCL now wants to publish a report describing the problem and suggesting remedies. They need more evidence, and still need people who have been attacked, to fill in the questionnaire. The information will be treated confidentially. Copies from NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1 (01-278 4575).

Doctors for a Women's Choice on Abortion
"A group of doctors who believe that the law should be changed to allow the woman herself to decide whether or not to have an abortion". They've published a leaflet which explains what's wrong with the present law, and argues for a woman's right to choose. Membership of DWCA (£3 minimum) is open to all qualified doctors in Britain. Others can be put on the mailing list (£2). Contact Dr Judith Bury, 8 Magdala Crescent, Edinburgh (031-337 8999).

Squatting is still Legal
"The aim of the campaign is to encourage people to squat and to allay their fears that it is illegal to do so. We would also be very interested to obtain feedback from you on the state of squatting in your area and any contact addresses there may be". Contact the Advisory Service for Squatters, 2 St.Pauls Rd, London N1 (01-359 8814, 12.00-6.00). They sell the useful Squatters Handbook (20p), badges: Squatting is still Legal (20p), stickers (50p for 100), and Squatters and the New Law, a leaflet which explains in detail the current situation. They also operate a legal advice night on Thur 7.00-9.00. Release's Housing Unit (01-289 1123, 10.00-6.00, exc. Thur 2.00-6.00) will also provide help and housing advice.

Projects

Well-Women Clinics
Send any information—range of services offered, length of waiting lists etc—on local Well-Women Clinics to the EGA Support Ctee, 155 Drummond St, London NW1.

Working Women's Handbook
The Leeds Trade Union & Community Resource & Information Centre is collecting material for a *Working Women's Handbook* to be published in 1979. They want to hear from women with practical experience of organising at work around equal pay, discrimination (including against lesbians), for creches, or improved maternity leave, or who are fighting sexism on a day-to-day basis. The proceeds from the *Handbook* will be used to build up the resources for working women at the Leeds TUCRIC, which is in the process of setting up a feminist library. Contact Jo Mollinson, or Ursula Hews at 29 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2 (0532-39633).

Lesbian Mothers
Lesbian Mothers (provisional title) is a book commissioned by Virago—a feminist publishing house. The authors are Gill Hanscombe and Jackie Forster. "We badly need to meet lesbian mothers who live in a commune, have fought custody cases, have adopted a child. All material will be confidential and your anonmity preserved if you wish. The deadline is 1 December." Contact Jackie Forster at Sappho, Basement, 20 Dorset Sq, London NW1 (01-723 3636, 2.00-7.00 exc Thur and Sun).

Home Electrics Explained
8/23/30 November, 7/12 December. One-day courses 10.45-3.30 at the Electrical Association for Women, 25 Foubert Place, London W1, on the "wise use of electricity in the home". Fee £2 (includes lunch snack) in advance. The EAW also runs courses anywhere in the country for groups of ten people or more. Contact the EAW Services Administrator, as above (01-437 5212).

British Lesbian Summer Camp 1979?
"At the lesbian camp in Denmark this summer an international group formed to discuss the possibility of starting additional camps. Now the British members are looking for a site or piece of land and would like to hear from anyone who can offer or suggest a place for use in summer 1979. We would also like to hear from anyone who wishes to join the planning group". Contact Shirley Kennington, 7 Crosland Bank, Netherton, Huddersfield, Yorks.

Centres

Big Move
Five women's organisations have now moved to the old *Time Out* offices at 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1. These are the National Women's Aid Federation,

Rights of Women, the National Abortion Campaign, Homeless Action, and Lesbian Line. All the old phone numbers are on transfer until further notice.

Haringey Women's Group Jumble Sale
14 October. 2.30 at St.Mary's Community Centre, Birkbeck Rd, London N8. The money raised will be used to print a booklet on women's groups in Haringey. Details about the group from 01-348 7375.

Hull Women's Centre
"The property has a shop and four large rooms plus bathroom and toilet. We would like help, advice and suggestions from any other groups who have set up centres, especially on ways of raising money. We intend to buy the place through rental purchase which means paying £15 a week over two years. Please send info to Claire de Casparis, Flat 2, 105 Princes Ave, Hull, North Humberside."

FUN AND MUSIC

Feminist Improvising Group
30 September. 8pm at Norwich Arts Centre, St Benedicts St.
3 October. 8pm at Brighton Poly.

A Woman's Place Benefit/Social
30 September. 6-12 at Malden Hall, Herbert St, London NW5.

Women's Festival
End 1978 or beginning 1979. The Women's Arts Alliance would like to have a festival, so if you're interested in organising and/or performing contact the WAA, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, off Albany St, London NW1.

PLAYS AND FILMS

Rapunzel Let down your Hair
A film made by women for women (reviewed in next issue) is touring the South West of England.
2 October. 7.00 at Exeter Central Library (near Central Station). Details from Exeter 70338.
3 October. At Falmouth Art College, Wood Lane. Details from Falmouth 313269.
4 October. 5.00 at Barnes Theatre, Dartington. Details from Totnes 862224.
5 October. 7.30 at the Plough, Fore St, Torrington Place, N. Devon. Details from Beaford 201.
Rapunzel will also be shown in **October** at the Scala, London.

Measure for Measure
Shakespeare performed by Avon Touring Theatre Company. "With very little adaptation of the original text, the company seeks to bring out the themes of state repression and the oppression of women". They tackled the problem of the predominance of male parts in the play by having women play them as women: Claudio becomes Claudia etc.
18-30 September. 8.00 at the Roundhouse, London NW1.

The Tip of the Iceberg
A show with music from the women and men of Gay Sweatshop. The theme is fascism. "As gay people we experience fascistic behaviour every day of our lives, it isn't a projection into the future, it is here and it is now. In asking ourselves questions about our perceptions and responses to fascist behaviour, we discovered that each of us perceived the concept of fascism differently. The result is a show which is a personal statement from each of us involved in the production . . ."
27 September - 1 October. At the Oval House, London SE11.
20 October. At Essex University, Colchester. Details from Gay Sweatshop 01-226 6143.

AID Thy Neighbour
A comedy of contemporary attitudes towards parenthood, by Michelene Wandor, directed by Kate Crutchley and designed by Mary Moore.
10 October - 5 November. 8.15 (Tue-Sun), 5.00 (Sat) at the Theatre at New End, New End, London NW3. Adm £1.50 (£1.25 claimants, OAP.) Details 01-435 6053/4.

Back to the Pouch
A new Women's Theatre Group show intended for 14-18 years old, written by Eileen Fairweather and Melissa Murray. "It analyses the ways in which society moulds girls and boys into adults, along rigidly defined sex lines. The show uses cartoon and surreal images, backed by music and song to make its points in an accessible and non-didactic way."
19-22 October. 7.30 at the Oval House, London SE11. They are available for booking from 9 October, and are keen to perform in schools and youth clubs. Contact the Women's Theatre Group, 44 Earlham St, London WC2 (01-278 6783)

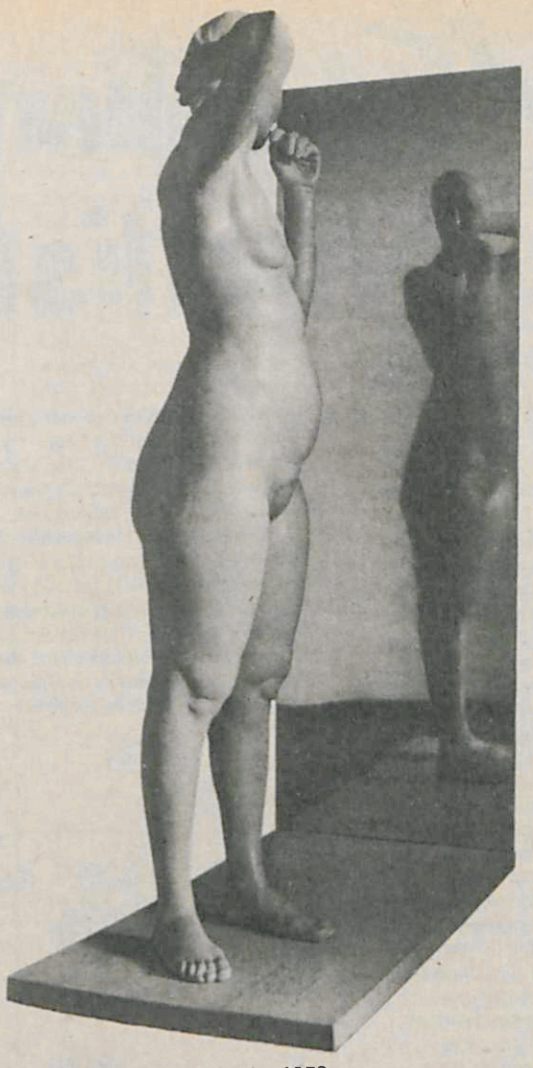
PUBLICATIONS

Lip
Feminists are calling into question not only art but art magazines. The second issue of the Australian **Lip** widens the notion of what's acceptable in an art mag to include features on gossip, women's magazines, book illustration and needlework as well as reviews of film, theatre and the visual arts. Compared to issue 1 this double issue is much better looking with generous use of illustration and photographs including a photo-feature on mothers and daughters. **Lip**, c/o Carlton Street, Carlton 3053, Victoria, Australia.

R.P.

Heresies
This American magazine, launched in Winter 1977, appears four times a year from New York. Each issue is published by an independent collective. *Heresies* doesn't review. "We will not advertise a new set of genius-products just because they are made by women". Instead each issue takes up a particular theme, for example No. 2 was on Patterns of Communication and Space among Women, No. 3 on Lesbian Art and Artists, and the latest to reach London is on Traditional Women's Arts – the politics of aesthetics, which covers women's crafts from the Isle of Arran to India, from patchwork to cooking and martyrdom. The articles question why such craft work has been downgraded in the aesthetic hierarchy, but deliberately avoids "matronizing attitudes... a smug feminism that knows the answers and ceases to be self-critical". However the extraordinary richness and diversity of form and content amongst the articles in *Heresies* should allow a moment's smugness for it reveals how thoroughly feminism has breathed life into art – theory and history. 120pp, 5 dollars each, (10 dollars one year sub); *Heresies*, PO Box 766, Canal St Station, New York NY 10013.

R.P.



Ludmila Seefried-Matejkova Mirror 1974 Fibre glass/aluminium

Working Women Artists Calendar 1979
This calendar keeps you up to date with women's art. Women's Press produced it "to make women's art available and to give women artists a new, extended audience". Accordingly the art is given more space than the dates with thirteen large, excellent colour reproductions of work by women from all over the world. It's expensive – but then the pictures are not meant to be torn off and thrown away as the months pass. They will outlive the year.

The artists who contributed to the calendar are very diverse – few are overtly feminist – and they work in various media; knitting, photography, wood sculpture, oil paint. But none are abstract artists and much of their imagery is self consciously female. £4.95 (add 75p for postage) from Quartet Books Ltd, 27 Goodge St, London W1.

R.P.

Chrysalis
'An hour in chrysalis to pass
Then gay above receding grass
A Butterfly to go!
A moment to interrogate,
Then wiser than a "surrogate"
The Universe to Know!'
Chrysalis is a daring American magazine of women's culture which appears quarterly. As in Emily Dickinson's poem it questions and examines – it publishes "material that breaks boundaries in women's analysis and redefinition of society, and that works towards the creation of culture in its broadest sense". The magazine mixes 'poetry' and 'science' with ease, thus transcending a certain male/female divide. Issues No.3 and No.4 contain theoretical articles on transsexuality, pornography, and language; historical explorations into female support networks; down to earth talk about money – how to get hold of some; interviews with women who write, paint, sculpt; poems, stories and reviews. 119pp; 3 dollars each (10 dollars one year sub); *Chrysalis*, c/o the Women's Building, 1727 North Spring St, Los Angeles, California 90012.

A.B.

Education Shortlist

**Indicates publications are available from the Pubications Distribution Co-op, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.*

School Girls Against Sexism. The union for school students (NUSS) is still fairly young, but is now firmly set to oppose sexism. Girls and young women students still at school are discussing what to do, how to organise, and how to set up a national network. One thing they think is very important is to start girls' and young women's groups, in or out of schools. These might be attached to local women's or feminist teachers' groups, or entirely independent. The Leeds young women's group is organising a conference in their area (late November), and are offering also to co-ordinate a national conference, too. So if you want to get a school group going, become involved in setting up a national network, or just get in touch with other girls opposed to sexism, write to: Erica Loredo, 36 Moore Rd, Headingley, Leeds LS6 4BJ.

DRAWINGS BY 9 YEAR OLD GIRLS AT A HERTFORDSHIRE SCHOOL

Sex Discrimination in School: How to Fight It, by Harriet Harman. A very useful booklet, 75p*.

Teaching London Kids
This radical education magazine comes out spasmodically, and number 10 was more or less devoted to opposing sexism. TLK is always very lively and close to the actual classroom, and in this issue it describes with accuracy and anger what sexist school life is like, and some of the ways to counteract it. 25p*

SH

The New Internationalist
August issue: 'Changing Childhood'

1979 has been designated 'International Year of the Child' by the United Nations ..... so watch out for lots of media goo next year. Meanwhile, this special issue of the New Internationalist takes a radical stand, showing through cartoons how sentiment about childhood disguises children's oppression and keeps them controlled and subservient: their supposed 'innocence' is used to exclude them from activities,

like sex and work, which adults want to keep exclusively to themselves. There's a striking absence, though, of any perspective on sexism, except in the inevitaqle bit on Asian girls (as if they were the only ones to have their marriages and family lives dictated by their culture), and the cover of the magazine is appalling — a boy child (of course) flexing his bicep muscle. I can just hear them saying, 'But we didn't *mean* it to be sexist, we meant to show that children can and will be strong'. But the lack of understanding indicated on the cover about the particular oppression of girls eats through into the whole issue. Martin Hoyle's book (of the same name) on which all the cartoons are based does not show the same lack of awareness, and we'll be reviewing it when it comes out later in the year. Meanwhile, all women who want to work out a *feminist* perspective on children's rights, before we're inundated next year with the bourgeois version, could do a lot worse than to buy this mag. and see what they think. It's still a very good introduction to the general topic. 40p*

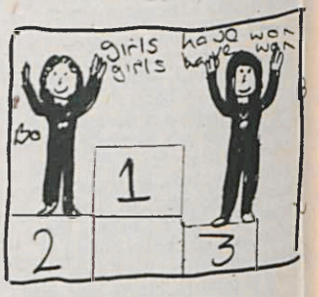
SH

Humpty Dumpty
(Number 9 Childhood and Child Care)
This is a radical psychology magazine, which is usually very readable and interesting. They do lots of special issues, and this one came out a few months ago, the first of several in which the editors say they want to look at ideas on children's sexuality, children in state care, and men's role in child care. In this issue, there's a particularly good article by a feminist mother on the problems of bringing up her son to be non-sexist, and two more on day care provision, Another piece examines in some detail the philosophies behind traditional text books on child care, and how they are used to keep women and children in their places. 45p* *SH*

Libertarian Education
A quarterly radical education magazine, which often reports on the progress of free schools, on aspects of multiracial education, (it is based in Leicester), and takes a firm stand against superficial curricular reform.
Libertarian Education, 6 Beaconsfield Rd, Leicester, England.
30 per issue*

Women and Education (Brighton)
A recently formed group who are preparing materials to take into schools in their area. They are planning an exhibition, a short talk and a play for small group discussions, and so far they've got invitations to about 6 schools. They would like to hear from other groups doing similar things. Contact: Sally Leahy, 1 Ivy Place, Waterloo St., Hove, Sussex.

Women and Education (Manchester)
The Women and Education Group in Manchester began in 1973 in order to produce a national newsletter to link individuals and campaigns around the WLM's demand for equal education. Since then we have produced the newsletter approximately three times a year, and have included statistics, book lists, useful addresses, reviews, personal accounts, and articles covering the range from child care to adult education. We have also organised occasional meetings, and three one-day conferences on ways we can fight sexism in education. We are only a small group, and always welcome interested women; not all of us are teachers, and we hope that our newsletter is useful to students, parents, teachers, and feminists in general. Contact address: 29 Corkland Road, Manchester 21.
Subscription rates: 90p for 3 issues, 60p to students, unwaged etc. (Cheques etc to Women & Education Newsletter Group)



Women and Education (Sheffield)
We've been going for nearly two years now and most of us are teachers, though some are parents, students and youth workers. We are a comparatively small group: usually there are about nine of us though lately more have joined and because we've been small and cohesive we've concentrated until recentiy on one project at a time. So far we have devised a method of looking at reading schemes for sexual bias and have carried out a survey for Macmillan of their Gay Way Reading Series. Several of us have been writing our own non-sexist non-racist supplementary readers about a gang of children who star-trek from planet to planet meeting monsters on the way. We chose the topic because some research has shown that the only stories both boys and girls enjoy concern animals or mystery. All we need now is a publisher.

We are also concentrating now on our exhibition, which will be held at the teachers' centre (Melbourne House, Melbourne Ave, Sheffield 10) and will feature many aspects of sexism in education and local efforts to counter it, including children's work, photos, and textbooks. It will be open from 9th to 20th October, to all those interested (not just teachers) and we're holding an open discussion meeting there on 17th October to discuss the impact of the exhibition and its implications. We hope that it might be able to travel to other teachers' centres, or that women interested in preparing a travelling exhibition will contact us. In any case, we'd like to hear from women in other areas with similar aims, to exchange materials and ideas.
Contact Maggie Anderson, 99 Psalter Lane, Sheffield

Moira Monteith, Jenny Cavanagh

Women Against Sexism in Teaching and Education
At the conference of the National Association for the Teaching of

English (NATE), York University, Easter 1978, the Women Against Sexism in Teaching and Education (WASTE) met for the first time. We presented 21 Papers on topics including promotion prospects, set texts, curriculum and sport. A Working Party has since met to plan a workshop at the Easter 1979 NATE Conference at London University. Anyone interested should contact: Maggie O'Connor, 35A Slaithwaite Road, London SE13.

Language differences — girls and boys
Moira Monteith of Bridge Cottage, Edale Road, Hope, Sheffield S30 2 RF is very interested in langauage differences between girls and boys, and would like to hear from mothers and teachers who'd help her collect evidence, so please write to her if you're willing.

Children's Rights Workshop can help with advice and information, including talks in schools (for a fee), on the content and use of children's books, especially with regard to sex/race/class bias. Write (s.a.e.) to Rosemary Stones, CRW, 73 Balfour Street, London SE17.

Open and Positive — An Account of How John Warburton Came Out At School. Gay Teachers Group, London. 75p.
When John's school students found out he was gay, and called him a pooftah, how should he have handled it? Not by discussing it rationally with them, according to his headmistress and the Education Authority. This booklet traces the anti-gay attitudes of his employers as they persistently refuse to re-instate him, and the evasiveness of the NUT as they wriggle out of supporting his struggle — with unions like this, who needs bosses?

Sue Cartledge

Sexual Oppression of gays and women: two conferences.
Anybody who breaks the rules about sex roles in schools and colleges is particularly vulnerable to attack — recent cases include the two girls harassed for wearing boys' uniforms to protest about sexist books, the headteacher sacked for getting pregnant, and of course the constant threats to homosexual teachers. But this is only the tip

of the iceberg — women and gays are much less likely to get jobs, and promotion in teaching is very much reserved for the orthodox male. Gays in the teaching profession have for some time been organising both within the NUT and NATFHE and have held successful conferences. Now two more are planned. The first, in London (October 19, date and place to be confirmed) is for *all* teachers and lecturers who want to discuss Sexual Oppression in Education. Topics will include the government's resurgent interest in 'the family' — "the State has a responsibility in this rather personal field", (Merlyn Rees), and many recent cases of discrimination, as well as sexist curricula and strategies of changing them. For details of the London conference, ring Margaret Jackson, 01-858 5670

The second conference is just for gay teachers and lecturers, on Oppression of Gays in Education, and will take place in Birmingham on November 11 and 12. The aim is to unite gay teachers at all levels of education and there will be workshops on coming out, problems with outside professional bodies, curriculum changes, role of the unions, setting up a newsletter, and ways forward. For further details please write to: P. Horne, 23 Belitha Villas, London N1.

WEA and Women's Studies
The Workers' Educational Association is a voluntary body providing a wide range of liberal adult education. Most of our classes are organised by students through WEA branches, whose members organise classes locally. Class students and tutors decide on syllabuses. Branches come under the umbrella of a District, and there are 22 Districts in Britain.

Recently the WEA has developed many classes in Women's Studies in response to requests from branches and women's groups. Classes vary both in content and teaching methods, depending on the needs of the students. For example, courses depend

might be about women's history, anthropology, the family, psychology, health, women and society, law, women and socialism, Marxism, theories of feminism. Teaching may be fairly traditional, or more informal and flexible, such as the mother and children classes held in two Lambeth libraries, or a confidence-building class through drama for mothers in Leatherhead whose children attend a local primary school.

Branches in London and other WEA Districts have been active. Aberdeen has run a successful creche and published a book about it. A Luton class member was encouraged to write a book on her childhood and working experiences, called Canary Girls and Stockpots. West Scotland produced six video tapes on aspects of women's lives. Liverpool worked with the Homelink Project to make living conditions better for the people of Netherly. Kidderminster held a public meeting to raise support for the local Women's Aid Refuge, and Birmingham ran a course on Homeworkers in conjunction with the local Homeworkers Project.

There is now a national WEA Women's Studies Newsletter, started by Carolyn Brown. Individuals can send 50p for 4 issues, groups can send £3.50 for 10 copies of each of the 4 issues a year. Carolyn's address is: 176 Hagley Road, Stourbridge, DY8 2JN. Further details about women's studies activities from:
Aberdeen: Margaret Marshall, WEA, Kittybrewster, Aberdeen AB2 3RZ.
Edinburgh: Carol Craig, WEA, Riddles Court, Edinburgh EH1 2PG.
Glasgow: Jenny Beale, WEA, 212 Bath Street, Glasgow C2.
Belfast: Margaret Ward. WEA, 23 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast BT9, N. Ireland.
Cardiff: F. Yeomans, 4 Coates Place, Llanrumney, Cardiff.
London: Women's Studies, WEA, 32 Tavistock Square, London WC1.
Alfreton: Gill Harris, WEA, Alfreton Hall, Alfreton, Derbyshire.
Brighton: Stirling Smith, 211 Queen's Park Road, Brighton, Sussex.
Guisborough: Sheila Cross, 7 Bramham Down, Guisborough, Cleveland, TS14 7BY.
Liverpool: Sally Cline, 45 Canning Street, Liverpool 8.
Or contact Carolyn if none of these addresses is near you.

The Feminist Education Group
We are nine women who originally attended women's courses at the Middlesex Polytechnic. As we were totally frustrated by the misogynist attitudes prevailing there, we decided to go ahead ourselves and set up a series of lectures which, we hoped, would interest not only us but also many other women.

We started our first course, the Ideology of Early Feminism, with the help of Stella Rosenak who was the organiser of our courses at the Middlesex Polytechnic. At the same time, we ran a feminist bookstall.

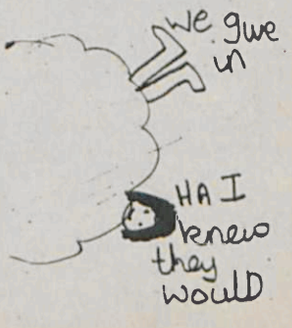
Owing to the tremendous response that we received from the 70 or so women attending the seven lectures of the Ideology of Early Feminism, we decided to run a second course for ten weeks, which we did, on a Feminist Perspective on Anthropolgy. This was an even greater success. This course we taped, and we are in the process of sending out the cassettes to women's groups. We also hope to get a book out on *A Feminist Perspective on Anthropology* in the future.

Our next course will start in January 1979, and details of this will be published in a future issue of Spare Rib.

Leeds Area Health Authority has just completed a teachers' resource pack on contraception. It should be ready for borrowing by teachers in the Leeds area from the end of October. If you live outside Leeds, they will send you an outline of the pack (send sae). M/s Garthwaite and Hunt, Project Officers, Health Education Research Project, Leeds Area Health Authority, 8 Park Square, Leeds 1.

The National Union of Teachers
This is the biggest teachers' union in Britain, so we tried to find out what its feminist members were doing. Carole Regan, of NUT women, reports:

Two thirds of all teachers are women. Three quarters of the NUT membership are women. Are women's rights a priority for the NUT? Far from it. At the beginning of 1978, there were 41 men and 7 women (two of these were domestic science representatives) on the national executive. *All* the regional officials are men, and so it goes on across the whole structure of the union. But even more indicative of the union's failure to take up women's issues has been the way in which the education cuts and increasing ▶



unemployment have particularly hit women. Part-time teachers, almost always women, have been deliberately employed on contracts giving them just under the time which would give them some protection under the Employment Protection Act, and they are always the first to lose their jobs. Inadequate maternity leave provisions make it virtually impossible, in the current climate of job shortages, for the teacher who has just had a baby and can't find a nursery place, to go back to teaching. Once it was married women teachers who were barred from the profession — now its teachers with babies!

And women's salaries are still in actuality far below men's, because they mainly work in primary schools where there are fewer well-paid posts, and less chance of promotion.

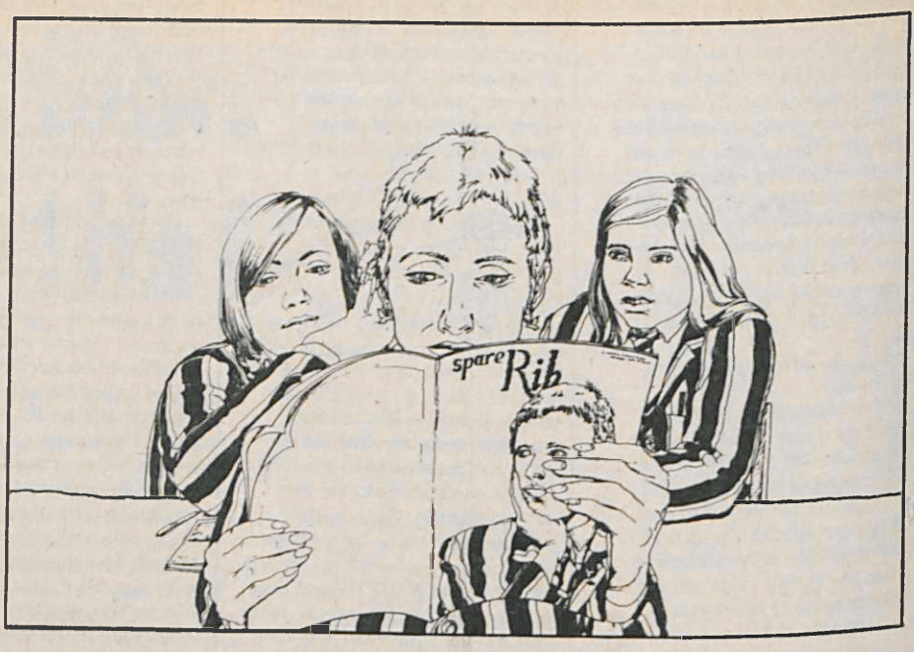
In the area of abortion rights, the union has consistently refused to support the right to choose, despite TUC policy, and the wishes of the members. The excuse given is that it would alienate many Catholic members, although in our experience many of these do not wish to deny rights to others.

Over the past few years women have put forward many resolutions in support of women's rights, high on the agenda of national conferences. In response, the executive set up an equal opportunities committee ..... non-elected and chaired by a man ..... which has some reasonable policies, but has *done* little other than send round a questionnaire on promotion.

But for the past 5 years we have been getting together in excellent 'fringe' meetings, keeping in touch nationally, and encouraging and supporting each other in local initiatives. And we now feel we want to organise on a more formal basis within the union. We've already produced two bulletins, and we want to have the next one properly printed. Before the summer holiday, we had our own national conference in Birmingham. A collective was formed to prepare our autumn bulletin, and to plan another conference in late October or early November.

Our main aims are:
Job protection for all teachers ;
Equal pay and promotion ;
The right of women to choose whether to have a child ;
Equal access to all areas of the curriculum for girls and boys;
Equal entitlement to the superannuation scheme;
The setting up of a national women's advisory committee elected by the members.

We have members in most areas of the country. Membership is £1. If you want to receive the bulletin, know about the conference, form a local group or keep in touch, write to: Carole Regan, 23 Kenilworth Gardens, London SE18.■



LYNN DUNCOMBE

Women's Studies in Schools

Should Women's Studies be on every school's timetable? If so, who should teach it and how? And who should study it, girls *and* boys? Together or separately? And should there be an examination? We'd like to hear your views on this, and meanwhile two teachers write here about their own experiences. Liz Waugh makes out a case for having the subject as an 'O' Level, and Dale Spender talks about the non-sexist materials that already exist for school use.

A suggested 'O' Level Syllabus

I have heard it said that if Women's Studies, or Black Studies, are made part of an established school curriculum, they can lose their original revolutionary impact and be rendered ineffectual. This is indeed a danger. We have to be careful when devising such syllabuses not to dilute the feminism just to make it acceptable to conservative exam boards. And there is also the further contradiction in having it as an exam—for me, the essential emphasis has to be on personal experience, and so how can I use an 'O' level to test it? What are we to conclude if a girl 'fails' Women's Studies? That she's not a good feminist?

Despite all these problems, rooted as they are in our exam dominated school system, where only examinable subjects have any real status, I still think that the advantages of an 'O' level outweigh the difficulties. I am concerned with spreading the ideas and knowledge of the women's movement among young people, and such a course would offer an ideal opportunity. It could open new perspectives to a whole group of students who would be unlikely to get them from any other source. Most 14-16 year olds don't spend a lot of time reading, and are in any case not likely to have much access to feminist literature. Such writings have often been crucial to our own development, and if we could make an 'O' level widely available in secondary schools, it would give this opportunity to a much wider range of students than just those who go on to further and higher education.

The students I teach are certainly aware of issues relating to the changing position of women in society. Television, newspapers, and teenage magazines frequently deal with such topics, though not in the way that feminist teachers would like to see them presented. So the feminist teacher has to work from this background, towards placing such issues as rape, contraception and sex-role stereotyping in a different context from those in which her students are accustomed to finding them..

At present there are two exam courses, neither of which is very satisfactory. Firstly, there is the London University 'O' Level, which takes an exclusively historical perspective, and counts as a History pass. Secondly, there is a CSE 'Mode 3' (partly teacher set and marked) course, which uses multiple choice questions in its exam—so isn't really very flexible. However, this is the one I offer to my own students, a mixed group of 16-19 year olds in a college of further education. They are, by their age and experience, often well beyond the level of this syllabus, but we do it because there is nothing else available. And also because it may be useful for them to have a grade one CSE (accepted as an 'O' level) when they go on to do 'A' levels. Indeed, many of them do achieve a grade one, showing that an 'O' level would be more suited to their level of attainment.

A 'Mode 3' syllabus gives me plenty of scope, and I don't just have to teach for the exam; the main work consists of consciousness raising over a wide range of topics. But the subject is relegated to 'elective' status, meaning it can only be taught outside normal hours (like basketball and swimming), and only for two hours a week. In order to get its rightful time and place, it needs to be an 'O' level.

A group of us presented a draft syllabus to the Associated Examining Board a year ago and it was rejected on the grounds that 'Women's Studies is a subject only suitable for higher education'. We have now revised it to make it more selective and structured (as the original was perhaps rather like a WLM primer) and intend to present it again to the AEB when we have got wider support from other feminist teachers and schools.

The new syllabus gives the students some compulsory work, and some choices. The central core would be basically 'social science' with studies of sex-roles, division of labour, nuclear family and alternatives, and perspectives from other cultures. Then the student could choose two from three options: either historical and legal aspects, or biological and physiological aspects, or the arts. 70 percent would go to the exam, and 30 percent to a project.

It would be good to get an 'O' level off the ground in the near future. If there are any teachers willing to let me use their name and address and if possible that of their school, in a petition to the AEB to show the extent of support for the general idea, please let me know. And I'd be glad to send details of the draft syllabus and assessment scheme to anyone who writes.

Liz Waugh *would also like to hear from teachers and students who would like to organise and attend a conference on the issues raised in this article – should there be an exam or not? If so, what on? It would aim to bring together teachers and students from all over the country. If interested, please write to Liz Waugh, 58 Butterfields, Walthamstow, London E17.*

Non-sexist approaches and resources

Although I'd encourage the use of non-sexist materials in schools, I'd also like to point out that they aren't always necessary. It's sometimes the most sexist materials, with their blatant message of oppression and injustice, which can be the greatest asset. Again, statistics *can* be helpful, but the manner in which the male head of department treats a female member of staff can sometimes provide a more immediate lesson. It's not essential to go searching for materials outside the classroom. You may only need 'a new pair of spectacles', and a good look at the surroundings—one of the basic methods of the women's movement.

Indeed, having a huge pile of non-sexist materials can't always ensure that the children will learn what the feminist teacher intends. Taught, as they may well have to be, through the usual hierarchical and competitive ways, such materials can be totally ineffectual in raising a non-sexist consciousness. Students can switch off while 'doing' sexism in the same way that they can in any other subject. That is why it is not enough just to concentrate on 'content'—feminism is much more a matter of 'method'. It is consistent with feminist principles for us to encourage self-discovery, to help people control their own learning, and to set up situations where we can support each other in developing our autonomy. Ideas about how to learn things, and new ways of perceiving can be more important than a syllabus—which one might never cover even in ten years of schooling.

In the following list of resources for the classroom, I have firstly made suggestions about how to develop those perceptions, and because I think we are all learners, untangling the sexist web in which we are caught, I haven't confined my list to books aimed at children—there is nothing that we should automatically assume that children can't understand.

Ideas and background reading for teachers and school students.

One of the most comprehensive books on the theme of shifting to less sexist schooling is by Marcia Guttenag and Helen Bray (1976) *Undoing Sex Stereotypes: Research and Resources for Educators.* It outlines a large research project carried out in the USA right across the curriculum at all age levels. It contains actual ideas for lessons in a variety of subjects, and is very useful for getting ideas.

The best anthology I know which outlines the dimensions of sexism and education is *And Jill Came Tumbling After: Sexism in American Education.* It has just about fallen apart, I use it so often. It has sections on why there are no (recognised) women geniuses, on stereotyping ('The Pink and Blue Color Line') and many more. Another American book I have found useful is *Sexism in School and Society,* Frazier and Sadker, 1973, which has some good articles about 'context', 'curriculum' and 'the future'. Women's reputed disinterest in the maths/science areas is discussed in the following publications: *Mathematics and Sex* by John Ernest*, *Girls and Science Education**, by Alison Kelly.

The Rights and Wrongs of Women, ed Mitchell and Oakley 1976, contains two very relevant articles—Tessa Blackstone's 'The Education of Girls Today', and Pauline Marks' 'Femininity in the Classroom'. *Gender Talking*, about language differences, by Dale Spender & Ann Whitbread, is available from WRRC for 20p. The chapters on education in Sue Sharpe's *Just Like a Girl* (1976) are very readable and could well be used in the classroom. Anne Marie Wolpe's *Some Processes in Sexist Education* (60p from WRRC) is excellent in its unravelling of the reproduction of sexism in schools.

Classroom materials.

A very widely used set of books is *The Gender Trap: A Closer Look at Sex Roles* by Carol Adams and Rae Laurikietis. And there are some good ideas in the Penguin *Connexions* series, 'His and Hers' and 'Love and Marriage'. The English Centre, Ebury Street, London SW1 has a booklet called *Sugar and Spice: Slugs and Snails* (send 25p). There is also *Living Choices: Home and Family in Modern Society* and *Male and Female: Choosing your Role in Modern Society*, Anne Jones and others.

From America again, there is an excellent book *Response to Sexism* packed with teaching ideas, including stories for children which raise the issue of sexism. (Write to National Council for Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801 for their price list and catalogue). And there is a new quarterly magazine, *Tabs*, to keep US teachers in touch with ideas for countering sexism, and includes a classroom poster in each issue. (Tabs, 744 Carroll S., 1J, Brooklyn NY 11215, write for details of subscriptions). And the Australian Curriculum Development Centre has produced a kit called *Re-Educating A Generation: Avoiding Sex Bias*, with materials for primary and secondary schools, teachers and librarians. (C.D.A., P.O.Box 826, Woden, ACT Australia)

Bob White's *Non-Sexist Teaching Materials and Approaches* contains many resources and suggestions for the classroom. Write to New Childhood Press, 152 Upper Street, London N.1.

And to keep generally in touch with other feminist teachers developing materials, the Manchester based *Women and Education News-Letter* (see Education Shortlist) is a must.

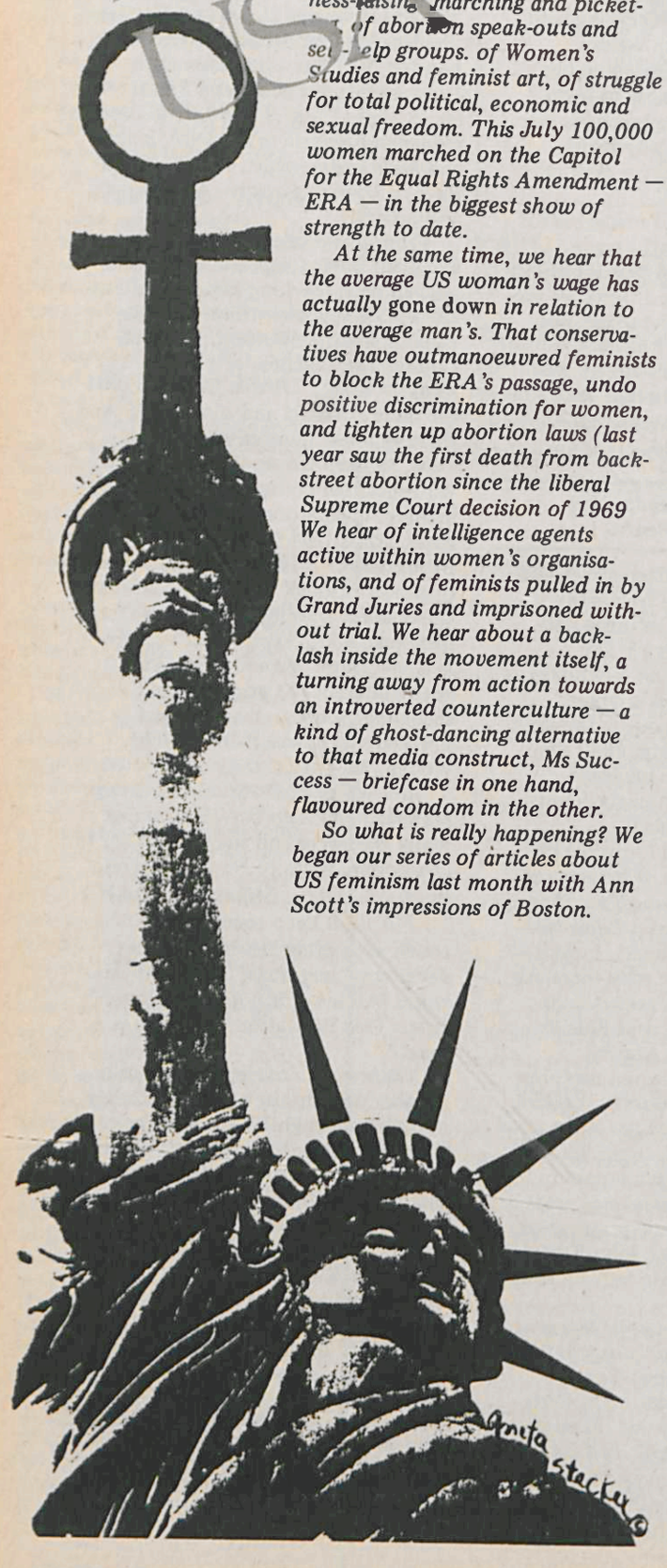
There is, of course, an increasing number of feminist novels becoming available through Virago and the Women's Press, to make a welcome change from the usual ossified sexist material in most schools. And in non-fiction, books like, *Is This Your Life? Images of Women in the Media*, by Josephine King and Mary Stott could be tremendously useful in terms of education . . . though that's not necessarily the same thing as school. ■

Where to get them: all unmarked titles are widely on sale; if in difficulties, write to Compendium Bookshop, 240 Camden High St, London NW1. Titles marked * are articles, and can be read at Women's Research and Resources Centre, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Availability of other titles indicated within the listing.

The US women's movement is the mother of us all. The first consciousness-raising groups started meeting within the black Civil Rights movement fifteen years ago, at about the same time that Betty Friedan's ground-breaking The Feminine Mystique *was published. The giant National Organisation for Women has been fighting for equal rights since 1966. The radicals of Women's Liberation have now had over a decade of consciousness-raising, marching and picketing, of abortion speak-outs and self-help groups, of Women's Studies and feminist art, of struggle for total political, economic and sexual freedom. This July 100,000 women marched on the Capitol for the Equal Rights Amendment — ERA — in the biggest show of strength to date.*

At the same time, we hear that the average US woman's wage has actually gone down *in relation to the average man's. That conservatives have outmanoeuvred feminists to block the ERA's passage, undo positive discrimination for women, and tighten up abortion laws (last year saw the first death from backstreet abortion since the liberal Supreme Court decision of 1969 We hear of intelligence agents active within women's organisations, and of feminists pulled in by Grand Juries and imprisoned without trial. We hear about a backlash inside the movement itself, a turning away from action towards an introverted counterculture — a kind of ghost-dancing alternative to that media construct, Ms Success — briefcase in one hand, flavoured condom in the other.*

So what is really happening? We began our series of articles about US feminism last month with Ann Scott's impressions of Boston.



Part Two: LEARNING FROM HISTORY

Linda Gordon is a feminist historian who has been in the women's movement since 1968, and helps to produce the journal *Radical America*. **Amanda Sebestyen** interviewed her earlier this year.

Linda Gordon: The first political thing I ever did was to react strongly against my parents – they were in the CP and I became a sort of anti-communist. But then I joined the Civil Rights movement and I worked for SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; and until the women's movement that's where I learned everything I knew.

Amanda Sebestyen: *The Civil Rights movement was a lot more open to feminism at the beginning than Students for a Democratic Society — SDS — wasn't it?*

Because black women were *doing* it, that's where feminism started in the second wave, there were so many black women active in SNCC. I wasn't a part of it then, but I learned about the power of mobilising people.

Then in 1967 I went to London and as often happens to Americans who go to London I became much more class-conscious. I was very active in the anti-war movement there.

When I came back here in 1968, everything in my life suddenly appeared in a new context. There was one particular feminist in Boston who was extraordinarily influential, Roxanne Dunbar, and everything she said just made absolute sense to me. I'm sure it wasn't really that sudden, but I do remember that just the year before when I had lived in London, Juliet Mitchell had been teaching a class at the Free University on women and I'd thought – Huh? Roxanne Dunbar built an organisation here called Cell 16, and I was in it.

It was one of the first radical feminist groups, wasn't it? Defining women as a class and all men as benefitting from women's oppression?

Yes. I identified with that politics and I dissociated myself from what I thought was the more timid politics of another group which became Bread and Roses and was made up of women who came out of SDS. I was too old for the student movement; and an important thing about the women's movement to me was – is – that it was a movement of *adults* and not students.

But the problem with Cell 16 was that the organisation didn't include a kind of rank and file democracy, and I was very committed to that. I broke with Cell 16 and joined Bread and Roses, though we had a strong anarchist caucus who in fact opposed the formation of any organisation at all. I identified with that point of view, and thought there were greater values in the continued loose network of many, many small groups thriving. I don't know if I've changed, but I think right now organisation is very important; in those days when the momentum was so high I felt organisation could have a fantastic bureaucratising effect.

You need organisation in moments when you're not doing very well because you need a sort of collective memory and you need some way of assessing where you're going and what's happened and what your gains and losses have been.

And in those days we also had a strong sense of community – even though we had no organisation – now I think a lot of people lack that. In 1969 when we started Bread and

Roses we were neither explicitly socialist nor radical feminist but there was more of an almost populist kind of rhetoric, and certainly the leadership was all socialist. We really were so optimistic, we thought we were going to be able to create a mass movement of working class women, we really believed that.

Bread and Roses grew so fast – every week at a New Left coffee house we held an open introduction to women's liberation and a hundred people a week came . . . it was just jammed, it was incredible, people were being turned away, and all we did was put a little ad in the newspaper! It was like this one period in which suddenly everybody was responding the way I had responded the year before. We were going too fast to be able to control the organisation, though we established a network of many, many little consciousness raising groups – then there were a lot of struggles, and it finally ended about 1972 . . .

I think one of the big mistakes of Bread and Roses was that it couldn't maintain what you might call a more radical feminist perspective. We got tremendous pressure from the male-dominated left to start relating primarily to issues like anti-war work, supporting the Black Panther party, a lot of issues that had to do with racism and class which were right but which really, I think weakened our power to reach out to less elite women. We were never able to come through, for example, with any serious demand for child-care.

Then around '74 there were a lot of attempts all over the country, and Boston was one place, to start organisations which explicitly identified themselves as socialist feminist. All of these organisations failed, there's not one left. They all were essentially destroyed by the new wave of marxism-leninism. Basically people were coming into socialist feminist organisations who were anti-feminist, wanting to return to the 'Woman Question' which was nothing but a creature of the class question, and who did not think that there was any need for autonomous organisation – they didn't think that male supremacy was an autonomous structure from the class system. Women's organisations were to be fronts for recruiting advanced women. But why were these organisations so vulnerable to that? I feel a little diffident talking about this because I did not get involved – I was opposed to the socialist feminist organising effort here. As a theoretical trend I think it was a step backward – a kind of rushing towards Marxism and a retreat from the scariness of facing the fact that Marxism does not have the answers. I think that theoretically *all* the important advances have come from radical feminism and I think that especially as a historian.

> "a kind of rushing towards Marxism and a retreat from the scariness of facing the fact that Marxism does not have the answers"

In England socialist feminism has certainly been in the rear-guard in a whole lot of respects, and all the big moves inside the women's movement came from radical feminism, though I think that socialist feminists are much better at consolidating things.

The odd thing is for me that despite all that I still consider myself a Marxist, because I think that there is this methodology of historical materialism which is the only thing that can really help us. But when people state that class is primary and sex is secondary, then it ceases to make any sense at all.

I think working on *Radical America* was quite a help. When I started in 1972 there were only token women; now we have half and half, and all the women are feminists. This was my first contact with people who represented a libertarian tendency which at this time has been the only part of the mixed left with a basis for understanding how important feminism is, how enormously important. I think there is a part of the socialist tradition that is not only wrong in itself but is absolutely incompatible with feminism and the interests of women, and that's what I think about the Stalinists and that kind of . . .

strong, party-building . . .

Exactly. And I think that for all its flaws there *is* another socialist tradition with a tremendous emphasis on democracy – workers' control ideology, for instance, though there's a lot of male chauvinism involved, a tendency to think only about industrial workers.

It's a way of seeing women taking control of their own lives as part of the process of people taking control of their own lives.

Right. The thing that helped me survive and gave harmony in my life was I had this terrific job. I was actually hired just to teach introductory history in this university of Massachusetts, but I soon started teaching women's history and then I just fought my way in that department into getting them to understand that women's history was my field, that was what I was gonna do and I wasn't gonna do anything else and I feel so lucky about this job – especially now. I've been here for so long and I don't have to worry about getting fired now that there are all these cutbacks.

That's happening a lot, isn't it? In other women's studies departments?

Yes. Very very badly, and the whole attack on political freedom of action is really heavy danger. But this job has just been terrific for me, it forces me to be clear and it's certainly taught me how to write, because I think teaching experience helps people avoid that kind of Marxist jargon, dogma, heavy-duty language. I wrote a lot of short things, one was called *Historical Phallacies;* and then I started working on an anthology, *America's Working Women*, with Rosalyn Baxandall. We were both teaching and we were just constantly at the mimeograph machine because there weren't any books to use.

We were very conscious of not writing a victim book – we felt very critical of a certain tendency in the women's studies movement to just document more and more how terribly victimised women have been and that wasn't what we thought was politically useful.

Another reason we wrote the book was that the whole Marxist tradition about women is based on the European experience. We didn't have what you had, the massive employment of women in textiles and other similar industries. You know, it's still true that most women do not primarily work for wages; in 1900 only one in five women worked for wages in this country.

And you can't draw a disjunction between the lives of women in the home and in the labour of reproduction and sexuality, and what happens to them as wage labourers. It's also true to some extent about men – the choices that men make as wage labourers are affected by their family lives, their community life and so on. So we think that a feminist analysis could in fact renew the possibility of a real class analysis. For that reason we excluded all non-working class women in the book. Although they called it *Working Women* because American publishers don't like to say working class.

> "American publishers don't like to say working class"

It seems that most people actually don't acknowledge that class exists very much here at all . . . people might call themselves lower class or middle class, but they wouldn't call themselves working class.

We failed to develop the *culture* of a working class over here, as well as a more political consciousness of class, because we had a really different history. We had a multinational nation with many immigrants, a society that was still largely agricultural until very recently, people becoming wage labourers very unevenly, very slowly. And then it's such a huge country geographically.

These things about a country do affect the way feminism ▶

develops there too. For instance, in Britain the Utopian perspective isn't really a possibility, there's no chance of embracing a kind of frontier myth, going off and farming on a Welsh mountain — you might do it for a while but you'd starve to death in about a year; whereas in Australia one of the first things the women's movement did was buy this huge tract of land called Amazon Acres and people go off there and farm — I don't know how long it's going to last — but it's theirs, it belongs to the women's movement. We in Britain just couldn't do that — for better or worse.

At the same time I was working on another book, called *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A social history of birth control in America* – it's a horrible title, they wouldn't accept my title *Birth Control, Sexuality and Feminism* – a straight description of what I think it's about. I would never have written it if I hadn't been in the women's movement, and if there hadn't been this big abortion movement now. I started first to study stuff about the history of sexuality and I found out that if you want to look at sexuality from a woman's perspective you have to think immediately about reproductive freedom; I think the heart of the book is that the struggle for birth control was a long *political* fight. It's not really a medical issue.

Did the birth control movement take the same course it did in Britain — starting as part of a mass radical movement and ending up as very much identified with eugenics and a certain movement for social control?

It did that in the most general sense but there's one big difference: in Britain starting in the late nineteenth century, after the big trial of Annie Besant and Bradlaugh for publishing birth control information, there was a huge new Malthusian movement. It was very powerful, an upper class movement that was concerned with population control not with women's rights. We never had that in America really until after the Second World War, partly because ours was an under-populated country. We did have the same kind of experience with eugenics and if anything that was more powerful here because of the tremendous racism that grew up in the late nineteenth century around the immigration of so many of the non-Anglo-Saxon kind of Europeans into this country.

Even some feminists become very upset about that, didn't they? Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote some stuff in the twenties about immigrants . . .

Almost all of our nineteenth century feminists were Yankees and WASPs and I would say a very high proportion of them had great suspicion of immigrants. Often on feminist grounds because they suspected those kinds of peoples of being more wedded to patriarchy; and often they were wrong about that. So that is one of the big themes in

> "birth control was a long political fight – it's not really a medical issue"

the book, that the birth control struggle has been associated with racism and we should separate what's factual from what's mythical and really try to face those problems.

There *is* a general path that the British and US movements have in common, this beginning of an association with the left. In this country in the period around the First World War there was a really powerful socialist feminist birth control movement – a lot of women like Emma Goldman, and Elizabeth Gurley-Flynn from the Industrial Workers of the World, and a whole range of important local women leaders. I have a figure in the book about how many different towns and cities in this country had active birth control leagues in that period and certainly it's over a hundred, and you're talking about thousands of women mobilised around that issue.

There were basically three big stages in the development of the birth control movement. The first was what was called Voluntary Motherhood, which was a slogan of feminism in the 1870's; the second was what was called Birth Control for the first time that word was used, and that was in this period I just talked about; and the third is what came to be called Planned Parenthood after the Second World War, and it's sort of the corporatisation of birth control. I think the struggle going on today is a really important stage, that stage of struggle over abortion in which the women's liberation movement took back birth control away from the corporations so that clearly the Planned Parenthood Federation was no longer the vanguard.

Do you think there's anything we could learn from the earlier experimental Utopian communities and people who believed in free love — were they into birth control as well?

You have to keep in mind what's meant by birth control. They were all against contraception and it isn't because the technology wasn't available – the technology had been available since time immemorial. You can hardly find a single American figure in the nineteenth century who was in favour of contraception. Even the most feminist believed that it was immoral, that it was unnatural, that it was dangerous, and I tried in this book to explain why. They believed in abstinence; they believed in a rhythm method. They didn't have ovulation cycle calculators, right? But they did have the basic idea that you were safe sometimes and not safe other times.

> "no-one has really seen how important it was for women to fight for the right to say no"

I think that was very important because by rejecting contraception, when they said they were fighting for reproductive freedom they were also fighting for sexual freedom in a very important way. Their slogan 'voluntary motherhood' is also implicitly 'voluntary sex'. And just because of political blindness historians have never really seen how important it was for women to fight for the right to say no.

One proposal was abstinence; but some of the more radical freelovers proposed either withdrawal or what to modern ears is often an even more shocking proposal. That is, men can avoid ejaculation altogether – by pressing on the urethra at a certain point a man can experience the feeling of a climax but force the semen back so that it just becomes reabsorbed. It's not, presumably, at all dangerous . . . needless to say this has just got such a bad reputation now, you can imagine how it flies in the face of male privilege. But there have been some modern studies that say that people can use this method – it's obviously not foolproof but certainly it would greatly reduce the likelihood of pregnancy.

When the US abortion campaign first started I think there was something called a Freedom of Sexual Expression plank, which was supposed to include not only lesbianism but also trying to innovate and free sexuality from reproduction in different ways. And that's been a big concern among feminists in Europe too, in Italy particularly.

Yeah, this is a really perfect example to me of the relation of a historian's work and contemporary politics: it was definitely the kind of thinking about sex that was going on in this women's movement that made it possible for me to go back and look at this nineteenth century stuff and see things that other people hadn't seen, and to see that, I think, in their perhaps more prudish or euphemistic way, these women were really struggling to create a feminist view of sex.

If you look at the stuff really carefully that they wrote around the nineteenth century you can find women recognising that what they hate is not sex but the experience of sex that they have had, which is quite a different thing. I looked at the papers of the noted feminists and read them differently by really trying for a moment not to impose on them a kind of Freudian sexual repression, to

World War II magazine cover, from *America's Working Women*

just take them at their own word, and see what they really said. And there's other stuff that had not ever been looked at about the wealth of people here who called themselves free lovers. We had a lot of these sort of Utopian anarchist communities, and there were a number of big male patriarchal figures that ran the places, but within them you find little publications in which women are saying really quite extraordinary things, some of which are funny – like there was a Massachusetts group in the 1880s in which there was a woman called Angela Haywood who just loved to shock, you know, and she wrote an attack on the Buckle Hill monument because it was a phallic symbol, and said it was just disgusting and putting penises up all over! And she'd love to make shocking analogies, like saying that to prohibit a woman from using douches was like telling a person whether they should brush their teeth or not – to clean your natural bodily orifices was something that was absolutely one of your rights. There was just this fantastic rich and gutsy bunch of people, very individualistic and completely unable to relate to masses of women or to build a movement, but really by taking the most left positions making it possible for the established women's movement to do much much more.

Another thing that I found out was that there was much more direct influence from the free love movement into the feminist movement than you would have thought, and that despite the constant effort of the conservatives to paint the free lovers as proponents of promiscuity, which they absolutely were not – they were absolutely into monogamy, as it turned out – despite these attempts a lot of feminists knew perfectly well what free love was about and they would say privately, "oh well of course I'm a free lover, how can you not be a free lover". Elizabeth Cady Stanton said that many times in private letters . . . she's quite wonderful, Elizabeth Cady Stanton; part of what was fun about doing this was really developing a new respect for some people who I'd been raised to think of as terribly boring, and more recently the Marxist tradition always wants to put them down as these ridiculous bourgeois feminist ladies, you know. Just absolutely not true.

What do you think about what's being said about sexuality now?

I think *Our Bodies, Our Selves* was absolutely one of the most radical books that has been published, and Ann Koedt's *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm* was one of the most important pieces of feminist writing ever. But I didn't really feel that *The Hite Report* contributed to women's physiological self-awareness. I don't see what's feminist about merely sharing experiences about what kind of clitoral manipulation is best. And I think that the crisis is not about sex, the crisis is about the family. It is the suppression of women that is basic and sexual repression is created by that. My impression from some research that I did about women's sexual discontent is that the things you most often hear about why women don't enjoy sex are: because they're tired, because they know they have to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning because the kids are going to wake up, because they don't have any privacy, because the guy drinks too much, because the guy smells bad – all those things are just as important as his extremely insensitive sexual technique.

But there still seems to be a really fierce rearguard action against Hite – Masters and Johnson have publicly attacked her ideas as infantile, and obviously they are still committed to the idea of successful sex as sex which consolidates the family. And now all the American newspapers are full of the idea of a return to marriage and traditional romantic values, too. How does that kind of backlash affect the people you know?

I think that people are getting so freaked out that a retreat into a kind of authoritarian family is really on the cards. This baby boom over here is really upsetting me.

I'm amazed – because you've just had a baby! I felt very funny about saying to you that I felt threatened by the baby boom in Britain . . .

I feel very alarmed about it. I know a million women here with babies, and I'm the only one who is working full-time. Everyone else is living in families with a restoration of straight sex-roles, partly because they have more money than I do but partly because they're *choosing* to stay home. Practically every one of them has got married. I've experienced the conservatising effect on myself; having a baby throws me in more and more on the little quasi-family that I live in. Another thing that alarms me: a lot of people that I know in Britain still live in houses with a lot of people, whether you would call it a commune or not, I don't know.

But people are just separating into couples again even within those. It's money, you know, in Britain people don't get divorced as often because they can't afford it, and it's the same with these collectives. People can't actually afford to move out of the house, but what happens is that strict monogamy is re-instated and sometimes people even go to the extent of decollectivising their food.

Well, that was even my personal experience because I lived in a commune and I left it when I broke up with the man I was living with in it, and I've experienced myself getting more and more satisfied with living in a nuclear family arrangement and upset about what it means. And in all the other communes the same thing is happening. I really associate all of this with the economic recession, and also with the growing strength of a very economistic type of left that certainly wouldn't think communes were important and thinks that union struggles and wages and hours are what to do. Collective living all went away here about three years ago and it's a terrible defeat.■

Woman's Body, Woman's Right. A social history of birth control in America by Linda Gordon, is published by Penguin at £1.50. Reviewed *SR* 71.

America's Working Women: a documentary history compiled and edited by Rosalyn Baxendall, Linda Gordon and Susan Reverby is published by Vintage Books. Reviewed *SR* 69.

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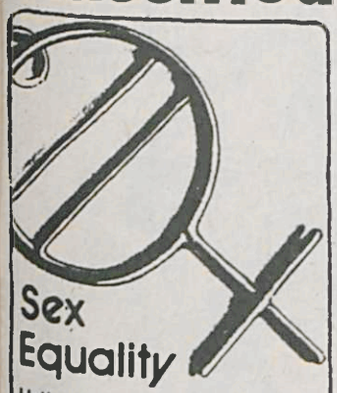

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Agnes Varda

PROJECTING CLICHES

French feminist filmmaker Agnes Varda talks with Angela Martin

Men and women had different responses to the film during the post-screening discussion at the London Film Festival last year. Has that happened often?
It depends on the country, the social situation of the screening, the time of day, the weather. When it came to discussion here, from what I understood, women were touched, impressed but for a while couldn't speak. Some bright-spirit men had the words right away before even finishing thinking about it.

People are involved on different levels. Some women have problems about motherhood, wanting children or not, some women cannot have children, have had bad abortions, so the subject moved them somewhere deep down, but they also get a kick, something that makes them feel more alive as women.

Was it in that spirit that you made the film?
Sometimes the first step for a woman is to scream, to say it's not the life I want, I can't take it the way it is – a woman should do that. But I've been doing films and thinking about these questions for years and I'm old enough to be over the first step, to be more serene and calm – not that I quit, I can't stop fighting, but I've gained something from all these years of meeting women, attending meetings. I mean when someone is wrong, tell them they are wrong. But you can say it calmly. You can have a firm precise feminist position and still feel good, calm, together and peaceful. I don't feel the need of being aggressive to express my womanhood.

When you spoke about Le Bonheur [by Varda in 1965] *you said the film was open – it could be taken as an idyllic situation or as critical of that situation.*:
All my films are made that way – when I am finished with a film it is open to different interpretations.

Le Bonheur *has received a lot of criticism from the Women's Movement.*
At the time the Movement was very young, it couldn't understand that we have to study cliches. *Le Bonheur* is now better understood. For me it went through what are the cliches of happiness. The thing about cliches is that they come not from something we hate, but from something we love. It's the perversion of a deep need – social perversion, commercial perversion – and the need is peace, the need is love, is summer, is heat. I've always worked on stereotypes and it's in *L'Une Chante* . . . like the stereotype of oriental love – 1001 nights, flying carpets.

You don't think Pomme [in *L'Une Chante*] *was chasing after that? I didn't think that was what you were saying.*
No, she met an open liberal man (Darius) in France where she was okay living with him, but in Iran, with his family, and he became a classic husband and she doesn't want it, she doesn't need it.

I know a lot of radical feminists say how could Suzanne get married again, but you don't know what she needs. She was alone fifteen years with her kids, couldn't even have a lover because they were in the next room and she is afraid they will wake up. Maybe the film is dreamy but it's full of practical things that a man's film would never have about women.

And were those things picked up by women in the small town and village screenings you attended?
Yes, many women said "it's the first time I've seen how a woman alone behaves when she goes to bed". We're used to seeing a woman going to bed always in the context of a man, she goes to bed with him, or he's just left her, or she's missing him. A woman alone gets the pillow, closes the curtains, gets into bed, takes a book and reads. A lot of women live alone and they deserve to be shown. Like Suzanne alone on the beach in the film, you feel she is alone and she goes through with it. She would love to be two but it's difficult. She doesn't want just a fuck-thing, so she says OK I'll wait and she gets out of her own trouble and pain with other women. A lot of women in the audience really like the idea that you can find help with other women and you can get out your own misery through collective awareness, concern.

Did any of the women you showed the film to subsequently set up groups?
Some did yes, some just talked about friendship, saying, "Oh yes, I had a friend, I loved her so much and for some reason, after my wedding, I just forgot about her, and now the film has made me nostalgic and I will write to her"

Did you have many women in your film crew?
We had a man doing lighting-photography – it was a co-production – but we had a woman operating the camera, a woman focus-puller, a woman set designer, a woman costume designer and assistant, composers. So women had a lot of responsibility not only as the classic continuity girl and make-up girl. I was trying to get rid of roles, because that's what kills. OK my role is to make a film. I'm the most responsible in terms of point-of-view, but still my role is not to play the wha-wha, to be artistic in a tower.

There was a question at the screening about your not having a woman in the film who definitely chooses not to have a child, and another about there not being any real sense of collectivity in the film.
Why do you want one film to carry everything, every single problem in a woman's life? I have made it clear that I am not a spokeswoman for any group because I cannot be, and feminism is big enough to have many voices, many tunes.■

REVIEWS

FILMS

One Sings, the Other Doesn't

by Agnes Varda

One Sings, the Other Doesn't is a £200,000 feature film, and it's *also* real life feminist, covering an abortion demo, scenes from a women's family planning clinic, a travelling women's band... but it's far from being a campaign film; it uses the context of the Women's Movement to examine, quite simply, a friendship.

The film starts in 1962 when Pauline, 17 and truculent, recognises a photo of a Madonna-like woman in a gallery, and sarcastically complains to the bohemian photographer about how the image conjured up passivity and suffering – and then the narrative floods over us; the woman in the picture, Suzanne, is 'his' woman, the child also his. Suzanne (whom Pauline's parents had always branded as a 'loose' woman) is living in abject poverty, is pregnant again, and wants an abortion. Pauline and Suzanne meet – a young 17 and an old or ageless 22. Over this period of crisis there's a kind of unthinking closeness between the women. The rest of the film is a flux of meetings and long separations, postcards, absences, reunions.

With any luck we're entering a golden age of feminist features (*Rapunzel*, the London Scala autumn season, Weill's *Girlfriends*, opening in October) so it's worth considering what directions these films are taking, and how they come to terms with the conventions of the big-time. I would absolutely disagree with American critics who have likened this film to the 'friendship' movie of the Newman/Redford type; because where Hollywood sets up narcissistic relationships for infinitely reflecting the symbolic male, Varda here has cinematically no universal symbols at her command; what's the feminist equivalent of Peter Fonda on a motorbike? She has another approach: "significance is not a *message*. This is not a militant film." What kind of significance? Not symbols, but "we have to study cliches"... working outwards from everybody's first idea of heterosexual romance, of the unmarried mother, and so on, she's not afraid to deal with sentimentality. However, we never end up in the compromising fantasy of a film like Hollywood's *Julia*.

One Sings is an idealistic film open-ended; but so lyrical and pleasurable that it deserves to be seen and its politics discussed. And not just in London!

Sue Clayton

Cria Cuervos

directed by Carlos Saura

(Gala Film Distributors)

This is about death and sex through the eyes of an eight year old girl. But the point is not to show the loss of innocence, or the unattractive face of adulthood, but what it's like to be eight and to miss your mother. The girl – played by Ana Torrent, the beautiful younger child in *Spirit of the Beehive* – and her sisters are miraculously portrayed, as averagely good, averagely thoughtful girls who stick together protectively. The film isn't in the least sentimental because it's so accurate – but when the three of them, Ana feminine, one sister awkwardly pubescent, the other just growing out of toddler chubbiness, dance to a weepy popsong I started to get all choked up, and stayed that way for the rest of the film.

Ana's mother has died, in Ana's eyes because her father neglected her – and so Ana wishes her father dead, and tries to poison the aunt who takes her mother's place. She also imagines being caressed and kissed by her mother, but the film isn't any more Freudian than it is a thriller. Her mother was just the kind of mother an eight year old would adore – beautiful, frail, a concert pianist who gave up her career for her children and was lonely and dying. The film cuts from Ana imagining/remembering her mother, to the present, and to the future adult Ana, all to build up the picture of Ana in this particular bleak summer of her childhood.

The film is full of women – her aunt who wants to love her new charges, but finds them cold, the housekeeper who feeds Ana the details of her father's roving sexuality and her mother's saintliness that fill in her interpretation of her past, her grandmother who's given up talking. Most of it is set inside their Madrid home, with exquisite interior shots of the moods of the different rooms.

It's a very sad, but powerful film. I came away with

Ana playing Mummy, from *Cria Cuervos*

the images of Ana watching, totally engrossed, the adult scenes around her – and her sitting up in bed and crying "Mama! Mama! Mama!" I certainly want to see it again.

Ruth Wallsgrove

Cria Cuervos will go on general release in October.

International Velvet

Directed by Bryan Forbes

(CIC)

I had a horse for ten years, was scared of him and loved him, competed in gymkhanas, made up stories as I groomed and fed him. I still dream about riding and it's not just a stud-substitute, "very Freudian" as some cocky youth said to me when I was 13. Of all the horse books I once devoured, Enid Bagnold's *National Velvet*, published in 1935, was perhaps the best – gritty in its intense detail of family life, quite shocking in its talk of knickers, spit and birdshit, and so imaginative in the language it uses – all that plus the basic feminism of its plot (butcher's daughter disguised as boy wins the Grand National on a horse she won in a raffle) makes it very special.

More often I would read more superficial, sentimental books like *Jill's Gymkhana* – the *Famous Five* of pony books. *International Velvet* falls somewhere between them and *Love Story*. Written as a book and film-script by Bryan Forbes, it's a sequel to *National Velvet*. Sulky Sarah comes from America to live with her aunt, the grown-up Velvet, and ends up winning for Britain in the Olympics on Arizona Pie, the last son of Velvet's national winner. I read the first instalment of the book in *Woman's Own*, then saw the film along with

National Metamorphosis - from Liz Taylor to Tatum O'Neal

an 11-year-old friend. She found Nanette Newman (Velvet) "slimy" and was irritated by the way the commentators went on about how *young* Sarah was – she found that patronising.

The film is "good family entertainment", sentimental and cliched, but quite enjoyable. Well, we quite enjoyed it. Tatum O'Neal (Sarah) learned to ride for the film and does it impressively – the Olympic three-day event is excitingly filmed and almost makes up for embarrassing moments when the horse gallops into Tatum's arms *in slow motion*. The story is mainly narrated by the aunt, strolling by the rolling sea, making big statements about love and life ("Love makes all the choices for us" etc). She's ▶

living with a man 'out of wedlock' and my big dread was that they'd get married at the end. They didn't, quite, though Sarah does, to the star of the American team. You'd be better off reading Enid Bagnold's book – and at 60p it's a lot cheaper than going to the pictures! As summer holiday special at the cinema where I saw it, there wasn't even half-price for children.

Jill Nicholls

Vogue magazine gone into movies – Bilitis

Bilitis
directed by David Hamilton, from the book by Pierre Louÿs (New Realm)

Bilitis and her lovers are consistently beautiful in Hamilton's film. It's as though *Vogue* magazine had gone into the movies. But adolescent Bilitis has a hidden flaw, she prefers to love women.

The film is selling itself as a way of looking. The audience is invited (perhaps directed is more apt) to feast on Bilitis' diverting sexual 'eccentricity'. While the camera lingers freely over Bilitis' sexual relationships, the film's overt message is that lesbianism should be treated as an infantile disorder, something nice girls grow out of. Its covert message is marshmallow–soft porn.

Louÿs' book is a heady balm of sensuous delights. Bilitis recounts them as an epitaph to her own well-spent life as a courtesan and lover, a life dedicated to desire as to an art; she tells of skin on skin, of skin against bark, and skin in rain; of lovers loved and clients evaded, of bodies intertwined and of the flutter of scented doves' wings, even. Published in 1895, the verses (purporting to be written by a friend of Sappho's) are so steeped in her poetry that even experts are said to have believed they were translations from the Greek. Louÿs' Bilitis is exuberant, not guilty, all she regrets is the loss of her lover and her beauty. She has loved hugely, and she tells us so.

In an awful way Hamilton's effort is simply a modern interpretation of this late nineteenth century romantic fantasy, using something of its flavour. But somehow the changes change so much. This Bilitis doesn't tell her story herself, instead the film lets us watch it. Her personality is acceptably watered down by this change, and she becomes the problem teenager the film requires, without a strong voice of her own. Where Louÿs' Bilitis begins by taking off her clothes and climbing a tree to kiss and embrace it as she later does her lovers, the film Bilitis (lightly clad, nakedness is so uncouth) becomes a spectacle for the camera (and the audience), a model posed on the tree for a 'natural' photo. And where Louÿs' poems tell the memories of a faded courtesan, this Bilitis is nubile, and stays that way. An adult lesbian–or for that matter a film which questions the spectacle it provides–would have posed too much threat to things as they are.

Lucy Moy-Thomas

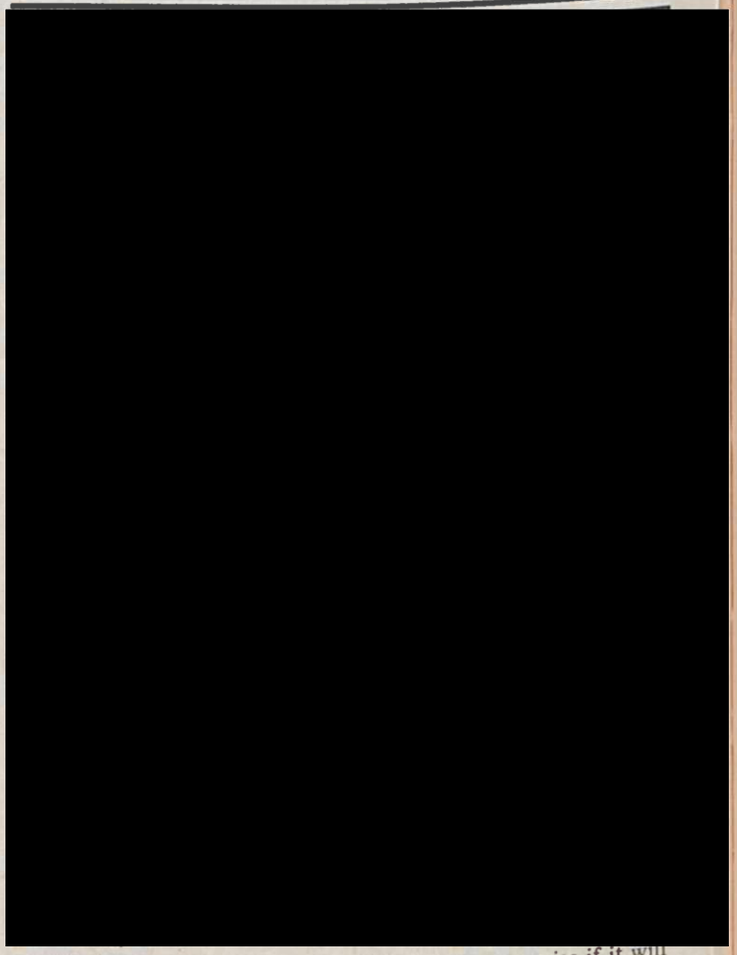
SOUTH WEST ARTS Weekend School

INDEPENDENT FILM AND SEXUAL POLITICS

This residential school, organised in collaboration with Falmouth School of Art, will be held at the College, Wood Lane, Falmouth, Cornwall on 29 September – 1 October 1978 and will cost £11.50 (£8.00 for students and claimants.)

It will be organised around the screening and discussion of a series of independent films, provisionally including the following: Anger's: *Fireworks, Kustom Kar Kommandos, Scorpio Rising;* Burch's: *Noviciat;* Dwoskin's: *Trixi, Moment, Silent Cry;* Rainer's: *Film About a Woman Who . . .;* Sharits': *T.O.U.C.H.I.N.G.;* Warhol's: *13 Most Beautiful Girls;* in order to raise some of the issues and questions involved in diverse modes of representation in the avant-garde, political questions which relate to sexuality, feminism and to see how these areas interrelate through the examination of avant-garde work which challenges both dominant sexuality and the dominant mode of representation.
The tutors will be Laura Mulvey and Rod Stoneman.

Further details are available from:
Chris Rodrigues, Film Officer, South West Arts, 23 Southernhay East, Exeter, or John Wilkinson, Falmouth School or Art, Wood Lane, Falmouth, Cornwall.



THEATRE

The Woman
by Edward Bond

"We trained ourselves not to suffer" . . . and that is how they, the men, lost their humanity. They lie, trample, rape, kill, obliterate in a mirage of manhood shrouded in pride and glory, ambition driving them to insanity and destruction. And the women . . . they bleed because they reason with feeling, and tremble for the world through the eyes of their children.

Edward Bond subtitled his stark allegory: *Scenes of War and Freedom*. The war is between Athens and Troy: republican Athens ruled by scheming male politicians and proto-typical of emerging capitalism, and Troy protected by the old queen Hecuba but crumbling and eaten away by the plague and corruption. Hecuba wants an end to the war and is prepared to compromise if it will save the people. After an intimate chat – Hecuba even suggests a cup of tea – she convinces Ismene, the Greek commander's wife, that the men-of-war are double-faced and cannot be trusted, and that real justice and freedom lie in truth. They conspire for peace. But wars aren't won by tenderness, so history according to Bond claims its inevitably dialectical path. And as feudal Troy is razed to the ground Hecuba blinds herself to the evils of the world.

The economical use of props, and striking imagery like the plague, the storm, blood and blinding, the wide-open semicircular Olivier stage akin to the classical amphitheatres, all add an aesthetics to the action befitting the high moral values it extols. The first act left me stunned.

Unfortunately what started as a wonderful exploration of the different realities of both sexes, ends up rather dis-

appointingly. Edward Bond provides us with a socialist solution through a wizened Hecuba: she gets the symbolic proletarian (male) to kill the symbolic capitalist. So *The Woman* doesn't come up with anything spectacularly new, nor, for that matter, does anything emerge from her 'womansense'. How can she – she's Edward Bond. But Edward Bond claims she "represents the nature of historical development". Oh womanhood, what next. We've been justice, fortune, and now this; will objectification never end?

The irony of it was that I never saw if Hecuba got her sight back in the end, because I was trying to comfort the woman in front of me who was beginning to feel ill. Her male companion kept apologising to everyone around for the disturbance.

Anny Brackx

Currently playing at the Olivier Theatre, South Bank, London SE1. For details of performances telephone 01-928 2252.

Helen and her Friends

by Bryony Lavery

Facing death over a ploughman's lunch and a glass of claret is an exercise in surreal living. For three quarters of an hour three actresses (Les Oeufs Malades) sweep the audience into a confrontation with their own finiteness, in a performance which draws its powerfulness from restraint and perfect timing.

Helen is dying from internal injuries after an accident–she knows, and her friends know. But they have no way of talking about it. So death is on the peripheries of every movement and every look over the sterile-white bed. Helen hints and at one time even says to Diane she's dying, but Diane doesn't want to know. "So what, I'm dieting" she answers.

As the sardonic humour starts going over the edge, the increasing but beautifully contained hysteria spreads to the audience–the laughter becomes uneasy. . . We've all had to cope with dying friends. And then there's no words left in the play; Diane and Eleanor just stare blankly. Helen's the one to break the silence. "Sorry" is her last contribution to life–sorry for making us all feel mortal. And when the lights went on we were left with a huge existential sadness, and half of the day to get through.

Anny Brackx

Les Oeufs Malades will be performing this play at The Oval Theatre, London, soon–for details telephone 01-735 2786.

MUSIC

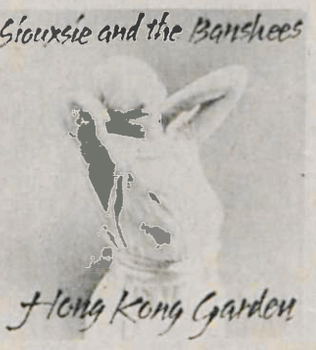
Hong Kong Garden

Siouxsie and the Banshees

(Polydor)

Chopsticks tapping on a table, insistent guitar, two chords repeating themselves and Siouxsie's voice strained and tight. I really like the stylisation of the Banshees' first single. The sound is cut out of silence, clean-edged and vibrant; the words (by Siouxsie) vibrate too, in fragments and images that don't add up. They seem to be about prostitution and pollution–and about disorientation. The flip side is so disoriented it lost me–ugly, with pretentious words. The Banshees (all men but Siouxsie, despite the name, meaning witches) have always been big on "no compromise", rejecting the 'punk' label and the record labels. Well, they're signed now and this one should sell.

There's an album to follow soon, with such grisly titles as 'Carcass' and 'Helter Skelter'. **Jill Nicholls**



The sleeve–spacious but a bit hack in its rubbed-in surrealism. The lyrics are handwritten inside. But only the first come get served: companies now deliberately print too few sleeves to make the fans buy early and push the record up the charts. "Collectors' items" of the supposedly disposable New Wave.

Almighty Fire

Aretha Franklin

(Atlantic)

Ever since the age of twelve when she became a star soloist in her father's Detroit Church, Aretha Franklin has been upsetting rules about music and upsetting her listeners simultaneously. Just like Ray Charles, one of the few male singers who can truly be judged her creative and emotional peer, she brought the forms and feeling of black gospel music to bear on popular song in the 1960s, reaching white as well as black as she did so. The time was right for this synthesis of the sacred and the secular, something that black culture had not previously permitted..

VAL WILMER

The Queen of Soul – Aretha Franklin

Franklin used gospel's uninhibited feeling of celebration as she swooped and soared over the most trivial lyrics like a woman possessed. Where Charles allowed himself to get down and be *dirty*, though, she always retained a certain dignity when she let loose. Her unique voice carried several unforgettable million-sellers into the charts, among them 'Respect', 'Chain of Fools' and 'I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You'.

What has happened to her since is tragic. She has continued to record but her albums, like her personal appearances, lack direction. Her artistic demise merely reflects what happens to those artists who have little or no say in the way their career proceeds, but it is ironic that for one so unrestrained in the musical sense, her reliance on outside guidance has always been apparent.

In her mid-sixties heyday, it was Atlantic's Jerry Wexler who recognised what could happen if Franklin's gospel style was given full rein; since then, she has never again reached her potential. She is, if anything, a victim of her own magnificent vocal abilities, her ability to improvise so freely often wasted with the wrong musical background.

On this album, produced by Curtis Mayfield, the singer sometimes sounds as though she has been squashed into a tiny box and is struggling to get free. Not that she doesn't shake off the chains at times, but there are plenty of painful moments while we wait for this to happen.

Mayfield, who wrote all but one of the songs, was once a radical lyricist. His compositions include such black nationalist anthems as 'We're a Winner' and 'Move On Up', but here he confines himself to shallow celebrations of the man-woman status quo. It might be a little silly to expect him to come up with anything that offers profound indications for women, even though in 'Lady, Lady' we have the mandatory look at the Black family. The singer muses *Many men have wondered how do we survive*, (meaning women) but no solution is offered. All she can sing is 'Treat me like a Lady'. It's not her fault but it's a pity.

But at times the singer improvises in a way that is little short of breath-taking. She exercises tremendous control over her voice in situations where it would be easy to go wrong. A record that repays repeated listening for the way the Queen of Soul uses her voice as an instrument. **Val Wilmer** ▶

BOOKS

The Bad Sister
by Emma Tennant
(Gollancz £4.95)

One of Emma Tennant's characters is supposed to "use Freud and Jung to achieve the aims of Marx" (phew). Things certainly get complicated.

Is the 'Bad Sister' illegitimate Jane murderer of her sister Ishbel (the lawful, the 'good')? Is she a female parasite in Jane's mind, Miranda the reflection of men's self-esteem? Is she a character in one of Jane's hallucinations, Marie the Irish housemaid driven to hacking her employer to pieces, sister and lover of some nineteenth century Jane (and isn't Jane's mother another Marie, and Irish too)?

It's not a modest book. There's Gothic and garlic and fangs and stakes. There are visions which sound like the picture on the cover of *Tommy* and parties which sound straight out of the Grovel column in *Private Eye* – all Philippino maids and "hookers who once knew Marlon Brando". I found myself in more and more confusion about the date of all this as well. I mean, these characters are setting up lesbian communes by 1965, which would be a bit avant-garde for Southern California let alone the Scottish borders; but then in the 1975 of this book men are still walking around in kaftans and using "gear" to describe the stuff they wear. It's ridiculous.

On the other hand, I liked the laughable geography: a never-never street with the Gateways Club at one end and Chiswick Women's Aid at the other. And I liked some of the writing, say when Jane sinks down into the world of Marie the servant: "I can see the labyrinth of passages, none more than a foot wide . . . the people and the prayers and the secret lives, layers of rich coal under the decaying house." Or an encounter with Jane's lover's mother, a white witch from Weybridge with a "little made-up face, hardly bigger than a gibbon's" and "eyes glittering from a bed of green mascara and imitation lash . . . her cosmetics, her concealed terrors of death and solitude were as poignant and distant as the rigidified body of an unknown woman preserved in lava". But even the good bits go on and on.

It all seems written with an eye to reviewers on some other paper. And it's still a vampire story really, an upper-middle class delivery of the gory old anti-feminist theme: Murder Girl Speaks – "Female Separatists Sucked My Blood".

Amanda Sebestyen

Collected Stories: Volumes 1 and 2: To Room 19 and The Temptation of Jack Orkney
by Doris Lessing
(Jonathan Cape £5.50 each)

Doris Lessing is one of the few women writers working in Britain to have attempted to describe the central political, social and personal crises of this century – with movements as diverse as the rise of nationalism in Africa, where she was born; the turbulent history of the Communist Party in Europe and Africa; and the bewildering series of choices available to women amid the moral and sexual confusions since World War Two.

As a sequel to her *Collected African Stories*, this is a welcome collection, though retrospective, since most were written in the 1950s and 60s. But Lessing is an extremely uneven writer, and many of the stories in these two volumes are little more than sketches, or outlines for stories. It's a pity Cape didn't issue a one-volume selection of the best stories, some of which contain Lessing's sharpest, wittiest, most concise writing – for me, better than anything in the novels. Among others, 'One Off the Short List', 'Pleasure', 'A Man and Two Women', and the two title stories explore with bitter courage the contradictions and painfulness of living, particularly for the middle-aged and aging.

Her most compelling portraits are of socialist, intellectual, feminist women, facing crises of faith in their politics, love affairs, and work. 'To Room 19' is one of the most haunting stories written about the problem of identity facing a housewife and mother. Dated as some of these stories are, this collection contains some marvellous pieces.

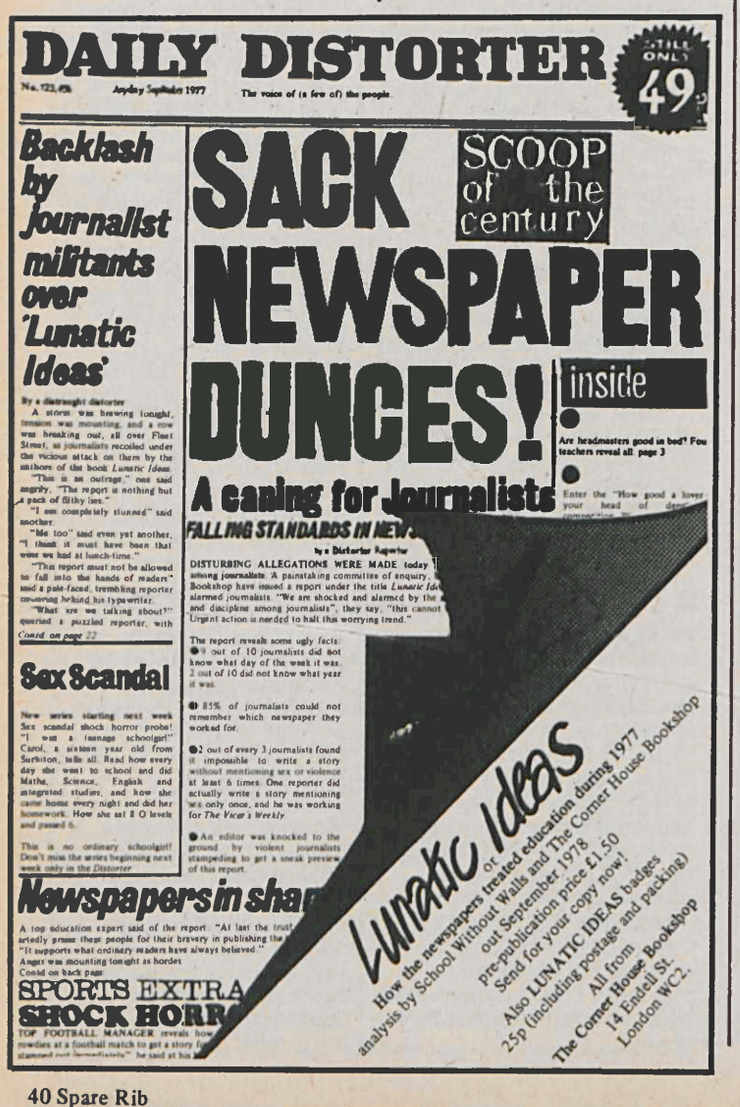
Helen Taylor

Social Origins of Depression: *A Study in Psychiatric Disorder in Women*
by George W. Brown and Tirrill Harris
(Tavistock Publications £12.50)

The findings of particular interest in this book – the product of nearly ten years' work by psychiatrists, both academic and practising, sociologists, interviewers and a statistician – are that depression is far more common amongst working-class than middle-class women. And the highest rates of psychiatric disorder are amongst women with one child aged less than 6 at home, and women with three or more children aged less than 14.

The study was conducted among 114 female psychiatric in- and out- patients and a random sample of 458 British white women living in Camberwell in London. It attempts to break away from the tradition of the social survey, and so provide a critique of its usual methods. The research team replaced questionnaires and standardized interviews with unstructured interviews intended to be sensitive to the differences in meaning in the women's responses.

The authors claim that their results "as they stand, can provide the kernel of a radical critique of the broader cultural, political and economic system, and more narrowly of the medical and other helping professions". They have, they say, "implications that concern not only the optimum organisation of the family but also the role of women in the wider economy and the values given these functions by the media and by society at large". All this is of course true, but why no recognition of the "radical critique" which already exists and has been developed in the Women's Liberation Movement? The authors are either unaware, or, and I think this is more likely, unwilling to acknowledge that feminists have been saying – also for nearly ten years – that being



COMPENDIUM

What Society Does to Girls
by Joyce Nicholson
£1.50+35p (p&p)

Catching them Young – sex, race and class in children's fiction
by Bob Dixon
£1.80+35p (p&p)

The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World
by Dorothy Dinnerstein
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telephone 01-485 8944

Stock comic stuff: girls are petty, envious and wet . . . blokes are aggressive and brave . . . but there's an occasional misfit – an adventurous girl.

a housewife is a form of oppression which, unrecognised, produces individual misery and physical and mental illness amongst women. More likely, I say, because the authors make clear their intention to produce work which can without difficulty be "integrated into the tradition and practice of those dealing with psychiatric disorder", and so, by extension, be acceptable to the grant-giving bodies of the medical and social science research establishments. A curious paradox exists here that whilst the research points to the "social origins" of depression, the audience in which they are chiefly interested is the medical and psychiatric professions.

Fay Barnet

TEENAGE SEX BOOKS

My Mother Said
by Christine Farrell and Leonie Kellaher
(Routledge & Kegan Paul £5.95)

Make It Happy
by Jane Cousins
(Virago £2.95)

My Mother Said shows yet again that young people are pretty responsible about sex and birth control in spite of inadequate information, often given too late to be useful. Based on a survey of teenagers and their parents in 1974, it provides a pleasant antidote to gutter-press assumptions about modern sexual behaviour. Certainly more teenagers are sexually active than they were ten years ago. In this study of 16-19 year olds, 50% had experienced sexual intercourse, of those 22% had done so before the age of 16. However, most of them feel strongly that sex should only be part of a "stable and loving relationship".

Only 8% of those who were sexually active had never used contraception (mostly boys), and significantly, of the 2% who have had abortions, half had not had sex education at school. The conclusion is that teenagers need more information at an earlier age.

Make It Happy sets out to provide that information unpatronisingly and without the bias of most books which stress female passivity and reinforce the belief that sex is mainly for men. To a certain extent it succeeds but with so few non-sexist books around I wanted to feel that here was a book I could unequivocally recommend.

The title doesn't help. It reeks of a coy, jolly FPA lady's "don't worry dear, it's perfectly clean and healthy really" attitude. And, in common with precisely that attitude, sensuality, pleasure, self-indulgence and all the other things I would associate with sex at its best are totally missing. This is a book about Problem Solving scattered with words like: frightening, embarrassing, confusion, depression, unsure, dishonest, bewildering, etc. It may of course be true that for most teenagers sex is a progression of difficulties with the occasional ray of sunshine but wouldn't it be nicer to hold out a little hope for the future?

The book follows the same pattern as most of the others on the market and so falls into the inevitable difficulty of trying to fit homosexuality into a framework which is based on heterosexuality. The subject is not ignored but is treated as the exception to the rule. It would have been refreshing to start with a discussion of feelings, relationships and emotions, a format which could more easily incorporate homosexuality as a valid way of expressing sexual feelings.

The information on contraception, abortion, pregnancy is reasonably thorough. I did however have a few qualms: the Pill is described as 100% safe if taken according to the instructions. This is not actually true. The description of menstrual extraction neglects to mention the importance of sterile conditions, and skilled assistance – omissions which I consider quite dangerous.

In spite of these criticisms, I would rather give this book to young friends than most of the others on the market – it's a pity that at £2.95 it isn't in their immediate reach.

Angela Phillips

KIDS' COMICS

NO CHANGE

Only the most die-hard children's book publisher today would dare to publish or publicise a book as a 'girls' book' or a 'boys' book'. And yet as soon as children grow out of their very first baby comics, they are offered 'girls' comics' ("Bobby Dazzler was the only girl at Westbury Boarding School for boys.") or 'boys' comics' ("Nipper Lawrence scored a great goal for his club...") It's as though the fight against sex-stereotyping had never begun.

Of the two categories, the girls' comics are more promising. Despite the endless stories about spiteful 'friends' determined to do down the heroine ("Marsha and Merle were two girls who were jealous of Judy's powers with horses") there are always a number of stories about funny, or imaginative or independent girls – like Stone-Age Aggie Iggy who gets back a stolen mammoth and 'Tillie the Trier – the girl who will try anything!'

By comparison, the litany of goal-scoring, trophy-winning, punch-throwing (YE-AAAARARRGH!) heroes in the boys' comics adds up to a more deeply alienated and rigid model of sex role behaviour.

But if the presentation of sex roles in children's books is slowly becoming less stereotyped, why are children's comics – the most popular children's reading material in the country – lagging behind? After all, complaints from the Germans (including a letter from their ambassador in Britain to the *Times*) about the way Germans are stereotyped in children's comics about World War Two are beginning to be taken seriously; and some children's comics have even gone multi-ethnic with at least one strip containing at least one black face.

The managing director of IPC comics said at a meeting last year that the number of ethnic minority characters in IPC children's comics is in proportion to the size of the ethnic minority population in Britain. But when he was asked why, in view of this population-oriented approach, there was a discrepancy between the proportion of female characters in children's comics and the number of females in Britain, he did not understand the point of the question.

The hope for the future is that the small but growing number of feminist cartoonists will challenge the pneumatic sexism of *Wonderwoman* (off with her spectacles, down with her hair and POW! it's a bunny girl knocking down walls) by breaking into kids' comics or perhaps even do one of their own...

Rosemary Stones
(Children's Rights Workshop)

SUZY VARTY 'HEROINE' COMICS

SALLY SHAVE, deputy head of a Hertfordshire primary school gives guidelines on how she counters sexism in her work.

Juni

The Box Up cartoon comes from one of her girls.

10 WAYS TO COUNTER SEXISM IN A JUNIOR SCHOOL

1 I teach on a one-to-one basis. It's exhausting, but it lessens the need for the children to conform.

2 I dress and behave in school, and use the same language and mannerisms as I do in the community, with parents and friends, hoping to lessen the gap between school and home.

3 I've made sure the school purchased and uses a varied reading scheme consisting of non-sexist books. And we always discuss the sexism in traditonal stories, like Cinderella, and often reverse the roles in such stories.

4 I never, even for the slightest convenience, divide the children into boys and girls, for any activity.

5 I never co-operate with other teachers' requests for "Four strong boys to move these boxes, please." I train the girls to lift and carry - very difficult at first.

6 I introduced and encourage mixed sports. The boys love mixed netball and hate mixed football.

7 In sewing and cookery which the boys do I always oppose suggestions that the boys will grow up homosexual (by parents or children) by asking why this would be such a bad thing anyway.

8 The children change for PE and swimming in mixed sex groups.

9 I encourage the girls to wear jeans and easy-going clothes and to get dirty if necessary.

10 We have discussions on sex, family life, and different ways of life in the community. I never give them the "beauty of sex and the mystery of life" talk.

STUART:
I think girls are too soft and soppy. They can't play football because they can't play. All they play is champ and skipping. I don't see why we should let them play. They should play together and mind their own business. If they want to play football they should play it with other girls and leave us alone, because they can't play properly. They should have asked us a long time ago. They sulk if they can't have their own way more than men. When grown women run, their breasts get in the way and it slows them down a bit.

CHRISTOPHER:
Men make people, by making love to women. And also women make babies too, but if there wasn't a man there would be no baby. So if the girls join women's lib they will never have a baby.

CHARLEY:
I think girls are very well off and shouldn't come and bother us to play our games. They are always complaining about how they need new dresses and shoes. But men don't - they just take their wallet and go. I'm happy to be a boy because they're tough and can defend themselves, but girls just stand there and scream.

PAUL:
I wouldn't like to be a girl because I wouldn't be able to go to the toilet properly. And I wouldn't be so strong because girls are very very weak, and I wouldn't play sissy games like ring-a-ring-a-roses, and I wouldn't like to have long finger nails.

ANDREW:
I'd hate to be a girl because girls always have to keep clean and have to help mummy in the house and are not allowed to climb trees.

or School

And MARION PENCAVEL sent us some pieces from nine-year old children in her West London school.

JANICE:

Boys and girls are the same in lots of ways: they're both human. I don't see why girls can't play football, because we would have the same skills if we knew the rules and had practice. The only reason we don't know how to play is because they won't let us. In Scotland, men wear kilts and trousers, and the only reason boys don't wear skirts is because they'd feel like sissies, they won't be, but they just think that. Boys think that girls are little delicate things, but we're not - I bet if we tried we could lift up a bar weight or punch a punch bag - but it's the men that won't let us.

CARMEL:

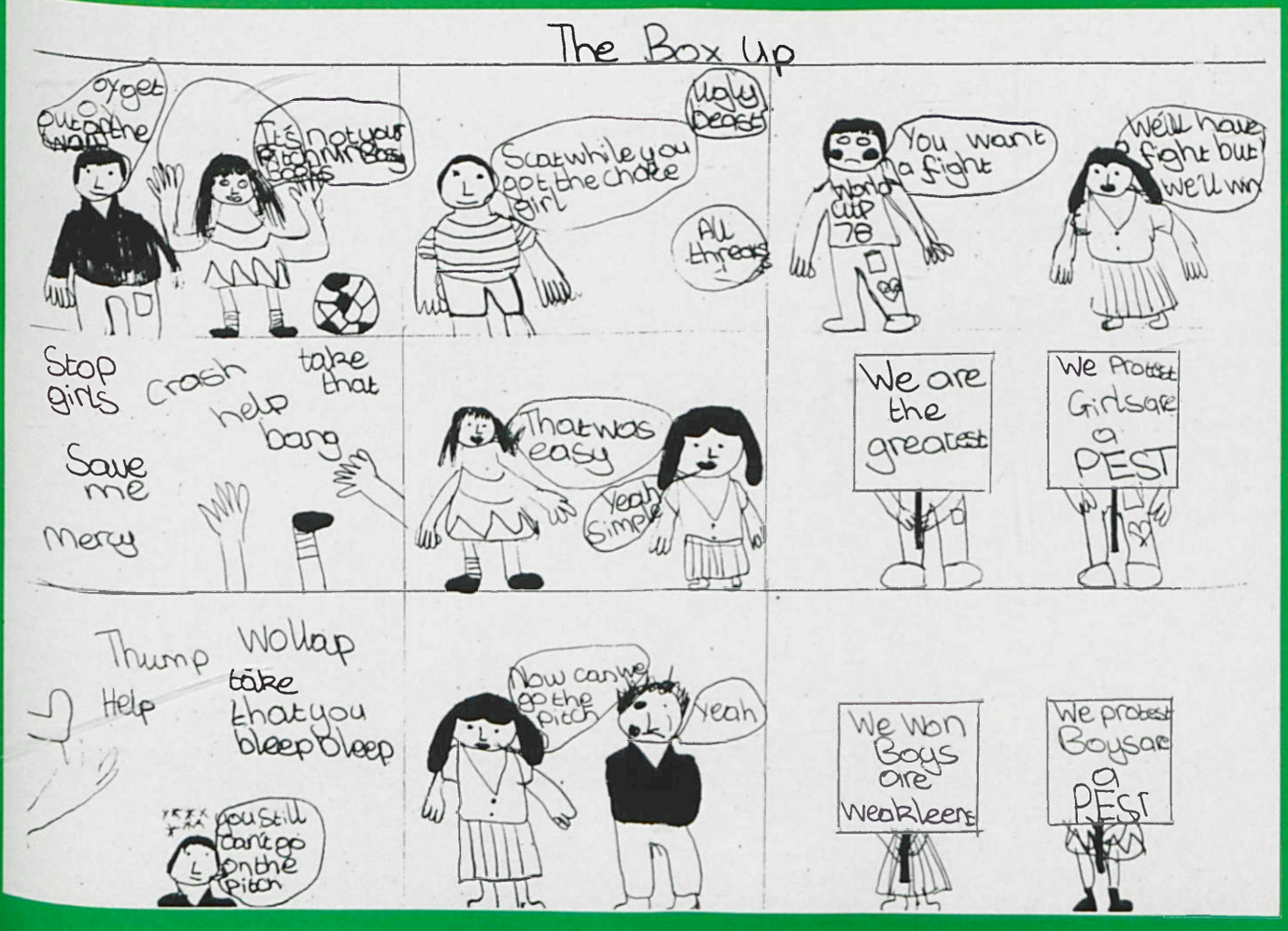
When the husband is at work most of the time the woman has to look after things. Well, I think that is wrong. Why can't the man stay at home and the lady go to work? I think she'll be quite capable to earn her pay.

HUMAIRA:

I would like to be a boy because you can ride a bicycle. I always ask my dad for a bike but he won't give me one. And if you are a man, you can get a job more quickly.

EMMA:

For some wives it's horrid because if they don't go to work they have to clean the clothes, wash up, clean the house, make breakfast, lunch and tea. Later on some fathers come home from work and say, make me some tea please. Carmel says she wants to be a policewoman. Stuart says policewomen only make the coffee, but Mrs McGlynn says Mrs Carl was a policewoman and she was on the beat all day.



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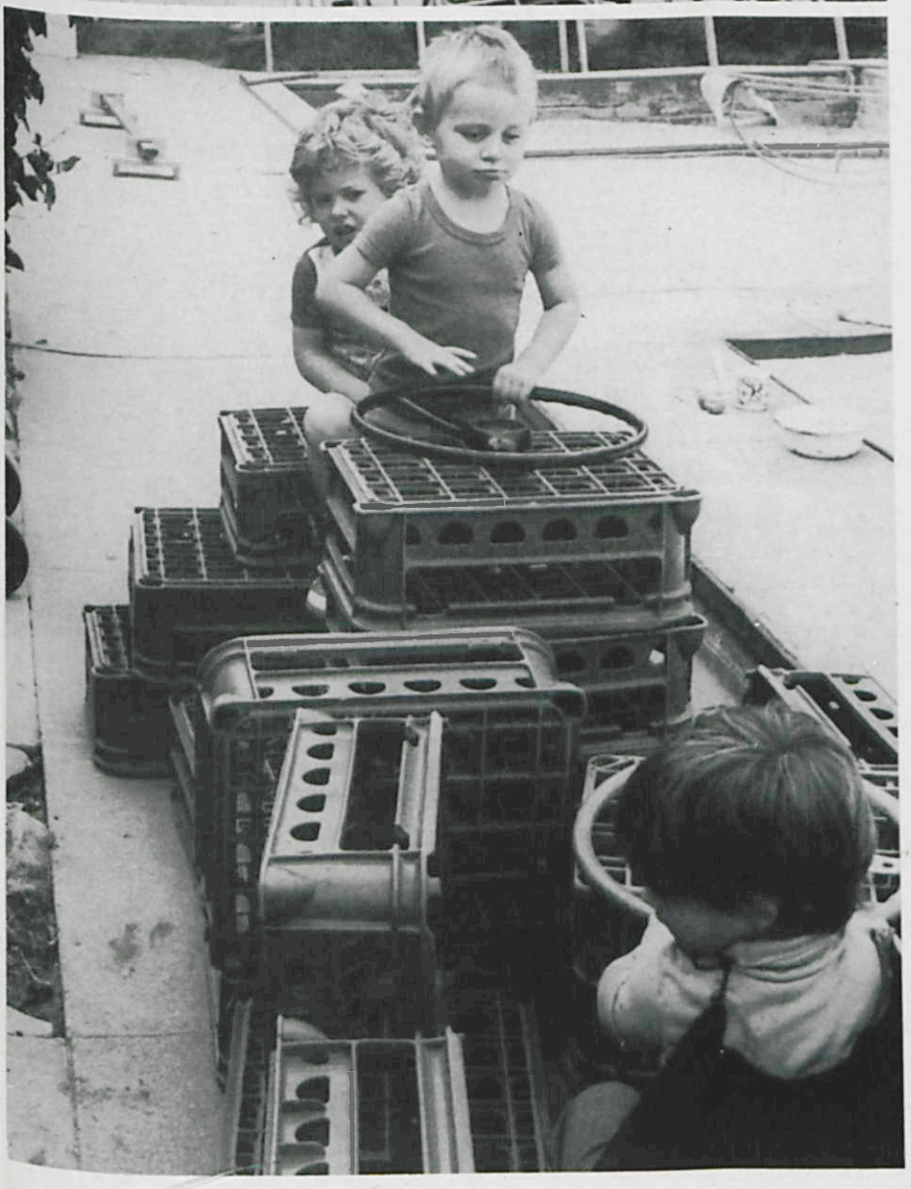
Co-operating... constructing



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[FOR THE GREEN MIBBEE BY LONDON]

Taking risks... taking care

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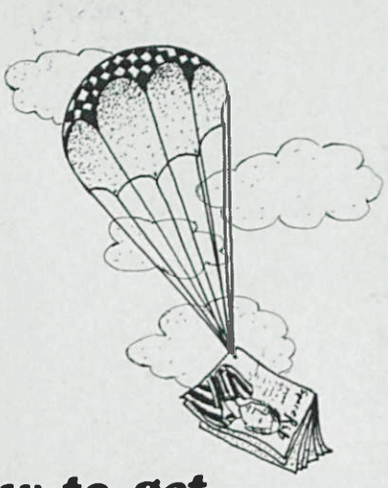

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